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"THE BUCCANEER"—BY FREDERIC S. ISHAM.

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THE SMART SET

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OF

C L E V E R N E S S

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WHAT FAITH
S FED ON,"
y Olivia Howard Dunbar.

HE TORCH,"
y Fanny Heaslip Lea.

HE FORELOCK OF TIME,"
Satire on Hair—
perial Woman and Her Crowning Glory.

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The SMART SET

for June

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Vol. XXXI

No. 1

THE
SMART SET
A MAGA
ZINE OF
CLEVERNESS

CONTENTS FOR MAY, 1910

THE BUCCANEER (A Complete Novel)	.	.	.	Frederic S. Isham	.	.	.	1
SAKURA (Verse)	.	.	.	Fuji-Ko	.	.	.	64
"NOT AT ALL"	.	.	.	Stanley Olmsted	.	.	.	65
THE PROPER THING	.	.	.	Clayton Hamilton	.	.	.	69
MEMORY (Verse)	.	.	.	Rosalie Arthur	.	.	.	77
CHERRY BLOOM (Verse)	.	.	.	Clinton Scollard	.	.	.	78
THE MINISTER AND THE MAN	.	.	.	Billee Glynn	.	.	.	79
A MAN, A GIRL AND A CURL (Verse)	.	.	.	Celia Myrover Robinson	.	.	.	92
A LITERARY CONVERSATION	.	.	.	Thomas L. Masson	.	.	.	93
FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE (Verse)	.	.	.	Chester Wood	.	.	.	94
THE FORELOCK OF TIME (Essay)	.	.	.	Reginald Wright Kauffman	.	.	.	95
LOVE UP TO DATE (Verse)	.	.	.	Willis Leonard Clanahan	.	.	.	99
HUMAN MOLECULES	.	.	.	Mary Brown Mésny	.	.	.	100
THE TORCH	.	.	.	Fanny Heaslip Lea	.	.	.	101
THE ROBIN IN THE SQUARE (Verse)	.	.	.	Arthur Stringer	.	.	.	110
WHAT FAITH IS FED ON	.	.	.	Olivia Howard Dunbar	.	.	.	111
A SONG OF SPRING (Verse)	.	.	.	Francis Livingston Montgomery	.	.	.	117
THE ANNUAL GARDEN STATEMENT (Verse)	.	.	.	D. C. Shafer	.	.	.	118
IDLE OBSERVATIONS	.	.	.	Amy Wetmore	.	.	.	118
THE TOUCHSTONE	.	.	.	Edward Boltwood	.	.	.	119
THE DEEPER SENSE (Verse)	.	.	.	Almon Hensley	.	.	.	123
GIVE LOVE TODAY (Verse)	.	.	.	Ethel Talbot	.	.	.	124
A LAWYER'S MISTAKE (A Play in One Act)	.	.	.	James Burghlie	.	.	.	125
LIFE (Verse)	.	.	.	Jean Wilde Clark	.	.	.	136
THE FROG AND THE PUDDLE	.	.	.	Amy Lyman Phillips	.	.	.	137
THE MAY (Verse)	.	.	.	Aloysius Coll	.	.	.	139
LITERARY MAXIMS	.	.	.	Stuart B. Stone	.	.	.	140
THE DOVE AND THE SCARLET POPPY	.	.	.	Marion Loudon Hargrove	.	.	.	141
LA MÈRE (In Original French)	.	.	.	J. H. Rosny	.	.	.	143
THE MORALS OF THE DRAMA LADIES	.	.	.	George Jean Nathan	.	.	.	145
IN PRAISE OF A POET	.	.	.	H. L. Mencken	.	.	.	153

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THE BUCCANEER

By FREDERIC S. ISHAM

MR. CHATFIELD BRUCE, on pleasure bent, one of a prospective house party at the new palatial country mansion of his employer, arrived at the picturesque little village of Conscot. The trip had been a hot and dusty one, but the young man, unlike some of his fellow travelers, appeared neither sooty nor ill-humored. A summer pongee suit, as immaculate as when the silk had left the looms at Chefoo, fitted perfectly the lithe figure; his shirt was of fine material and cool; he carried his light straw hat in his hand. He tipped a stout lad for looking after his small baggage; then, while others, in a fine perspiration, waited in the closed omnibus or dilapidated hacks to be taken to their destinations, he started to walk across the village to the road up the hill.

The day was pleasant, though sultry, the shady paths enjoyable. On either hand queer little stores and houses offered a homely and agreeable change from the monotonous skyscrapers and Fifth Avenue palaces. And if the casual stranger did not find a wealth of poetry about old-fashioned American clapboards, there were glimpses of the sea through green interspaces to appeal to the imagination and gratify the visual longings.

These latter effects, to Chatfield Bruce, appeared essentially worthy of contemplation. He paused, then moved slightly; the picture changed. A white yacht suddenly became apparent on the blue sea, twined around before him with honeysuckle buds. The boat appeared very pretty in that irregular frame of bright, waving flowers; it was an imposing pleasure craft,

no doubt, at closer range. Bruce tried to decipher the name. He could make out an "M," but no more. Minnie—Mary—Molly—it might be any of these. Or Marjorie!

Marjorie! Did his heart beat faster? Through his brain a thousand thoughts rushed, varied and conflicting, concerning the robbery of the Page bonds from the safety vault, the sudden demand on him, Bruce, for \$75,000 as a charitable contribution, a recent meeting in Central Park with Miss Marjorie Wood, and his promise to take the principal part in that odd Japanese play to be given at her house. For how could he refuse her? And yet—

He recalled her eyes, the puzzled look in them. For her, as for many, he was an enigma, a young man who lived on what he earned in the wholesale house of Nathan Goldberg, and who lavished the fortune he was alleged to have inherited entirely on charity. Mr. Bruce, dilettante and man of the world, some said *poseur* and eccentric, gave everywhere liberally, while he adjusted his own life along those lines of simplicity he had learned to practise in the Far East.

The chug, chug of a heavy motor car laboring upward caused him to turn, to see a girl's figure, the film of a veil, black hair athwart a white brow and blue eyes—a face distinct, yet intangible, with dust around it like mist, red lips shining through, as a flower afar in some shadowy screen. Bruce stepped back slightly—the road was narrow. A man's form screened hers from his; Sir Archibald Bamford, large, florid-looking, a recent arrival on these shores, sat at her right on the front

THE SMART SET

seat. An instant Bruce heard amid those explosive, persistent, mechanical sounds, vague protestations in a masculine voice concerning American roads, then a girl's light laugh; then the car passed out of view.

Bruce gazed after them, as the cloud of dust slowly settled. For a time he seemed to forget himself at the wayside. Then he walked on once more, at first slowly, then more quickly. The road became steeper. On one side the hill descended with considerable abruptness; on the other the bank had been cut into for the thoroughfare, leaving a perpendicular wall of earth about six feet high. Beyond this, a tangle of greenwood that had been allowed by the owner to run wild was further guarded by a thick hedge.

From somewhere in the distance amid this large estate the young man fancied he had heard once or twice the low snap of a rifle—the proprietor or his friends after rabbits, perhaps! He turned his head, on his face the sudden, alert expression of one not unaccustomed to danger, when the undoubted report of a light weapon resounded from the thicket near at hand. Instinctively Bruce moved; as he did so, a bullet grazed his hat. Quick as a flash he sprang toward the hedge, but the sandy earth gave way before him; his hands seemed to touch only thorns. At the same time he heard a branch break as before retreating footsteps. Realizing the fruitlessness of pursuit, he stood motionless and listened. Only silence! No, the deathlike hush was broken by a bird's song. The young man wheeled and dusted his clothes; fortunately, the sandy soil left no marks he could not remove. He regarded his hat; it was chipped. Rather ruefully he smoothed the straw with his finger; fortunately, the injury was not irreparable. He moved the ribbon slightly to cover it; one does not like to buy two new straw hats a season.

II

THE Goldberg country mansion, built on the brow of a hill, commanded

a felicitous prospect. On three sides were to be seen other houses on rather lower hills. Below nestled the town; beyond shone the waters of the sea. By day the waves gleamed like diamonds, twinkling unceasingly at Conscot's latest landed proprietor, as he gazed contentedly down from his spacious and lofty balcony.

"Very fine, eh, Bruce?" said Mr. Goldberg to his employee. The latter was being shown over the place by the other. "That view of the bay alone is worth the price. No better outlook anywhere! Needn't be bothered with one's neighbors here; they're far enough away."

"Who are they?"

The host mentioned several names, then, pointing with his finger to the left: "Mr. Wood's place. Good house, but he can hardly see the water from where he is."

"Mr. Wood spends the summer here, then?" Bruce remarked carelessly.

"When he and his daughter are not on the other side of the pond."

Mr. Bruce continued to look in that direction. "The grounds appear extensive; plenty of forest reserves, the real primeval sort. I passed them on my way up," he added, running a long white finger, slightly scratched, around the band of his hat.

"If it were my place, I'd clean up a bit—have cinder paths and a road for automobiles. That little place to the right, further down," again indicating with a gesture, "belongs to Colonel Manyan, an old army officer. The dilapidated, rambling shack you can just see through the trees over there is the property of Mr. Samuel Page. He got the place on a mortgage for almost nothing; squeezed a widow, a client of his." He winked at Bruce. "Pet game of the old fellow's; makes a business of being a professional trustee. Pretty small graft!" he finished contemptuously.

"There are certainly less reprehensible forms of grafting." Some thought, as Mr. Bruce's glance passed over the grounds of his employer's estate, caused the young man to smile. Was it at

Mr. Goldberg's assumption of virtue—that "holier than thou" pose he involuntarily assumed on certain occasions?

"Heard he had rented it," went on the elder man, "but am not sure. Sorry for the man he does business with. The old skinflint's got a nice niece, though," he added—"Miss Flossie Burke. She and my daughter have struck up quite a friendship lately. She's going to be one of her guests here."

"Here?" asked Bruce quickly.

"Yes. Glad you got around early, Bruce; you can help make things go. There'll be a lot of people, with a special car from the city, and what with the neighbors—." Bruce regarded him with sudden inquiry as he paused. "Sir Archibald Bamford is going to be here," he added.

If Mr. Bruce experienced surprise, he did not show it; his features, perhaps, appeared a trifle more immovable. The other, then, had met—knew Sir Archibald. Through what combination of circumstances?

Sir Archibald, passing here the first time with Mr. Wood and party in their motor, seemed struck with the house and asked to stop. As they were admiring it, I happened along, and Mr. Wood—we're both on the Metropolitan New Process Gas Board—introduced me. I invited Sir Archibald in to inspect the interior, and he accepted. We became quite friendly."

Bruce was looking away; he did not answer. "They told me they knew you." The young man lifted his eyes. "That is, Miss Wood did, after asking if I wasn't the Mr. Goldberg she had heard Mr. Bruce mention. She had evidently been talking about you to Sir Archibald. You must know her well," he said with interest. To know at all Miss Marjorie Wood, of one of the wealthiest and most exclusive old circles, was, from Mr. Goldberg's point of view, an achievement for any young man and stamped him with a big hallmark of social eligibility.

Bruce's firm lips smiled faintly. "I can scarcely claim that honor. I have met Miss Wood but once or twice."

Mr. Goldberg returned unctuously to Sir Archibald. "Told him about the little doings we were going to have today and he said: 'Of course you are intending to ask all the neighbors?' Which, I took it, was a way of including himself. So I sent invitations to Sir Archibald, his secretary, Señor Caglioni, and the Woods," concluded the speaker, "and they are coming."

The young man said nothing; he seemed almost absent-minded. The elder noted that lack of enthusiasm—perhaps was a little annoyed by it. But then he remembered Bruce had the entrée to places where lords and "sirs" were not unknown quantities, where, indeed, they congregated rather plentifully at times. So Mr. Goldberg strove himself to assume an indifferent air. "Democratic sort of chap, Sir Archibald," he observed, "in spite of his formal manner."

Mr. Bruce's comment, if he had seen fit to make one, was interrupted by the approach of a workman, who had come from the house, in his hand a bag filled presumably with tools.

"Think you'll find the job all right now, Mr. Goldberg," he remarked cheerfully, and upon that person's curtly observing that it was "quite time," retorted something about its not being his fault; that one or two delicate pieces of mechanism for the locks, taking time to make, had not come until the last minute. Which excuses being silently received, the man walked a little uncertainly down the steps, and shouldering his bag below, passed out of the premises.

"Confounded safe people!" As Mr. Goldberg spoke he involuntarily raised his hand to something slightly bulging in the inner pocket of his carefully buttoned coat. "Did you smell the fellow's breath? Whiskey! That's what caused the hitch. The idea of not finishing their work until noon today!"

Bruce's glance had caught the movement. "You have concluded, then, to let your daughter wear the pearls, Mr. Goldberg?"

"What's the use of having pearls if you don't let people see them?"

THE SMART SET

He paused before the collective noun. It was not difficult to read between the lines; "people" included Sir Archibald—or, rather, "people" were included with Sir Archibald.

"Especially when the necklace cost over seventy-five thousand dollars," he added.

"Including duty?"

"Eh? Oh, yes, of course. But speaking of the pearls reminds me," feeling in his pocket; "here's a letter came today."

The young man took it. The scrawl was rudely written; he read:

The same party or parties who got the Page bonds, the Morrow emeralds and a few other trifles accept with pleasure the kind invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Goldberg to attend the garden party and housewarming at Con-scoot.

Bruce laughed. "Well, what do you think of it?"

"A hoax. One of my friends who's been seeing that French Raffles—what's his name?—Lupin, at the theater, is having a little fun with me. You have no idea what jokers those scat and pinochle fellows of my club are. Or," shrewdly, "it may have been sent by one of those women folks who are envious of the pearls, who thinks it might scare my daughter into not wearing them."

"Suppose, however, by any chance it wasn't a hoax—that it is from, as it purports, a Quixotic guest, whose idea of honor would not permit a violation of hospitality without a foreword to his host?"

"Well, in any case, I've had one of the best private strong boxes in the country fitted up here. And what's more, only the architect and the safe people and myself know where it is. But amuse yourself any way you want while I look after these electric light chaps," with a glance at several men stringing bulbs in the garden. "You're to have a room here, you know."

"On the contrary," said Bruce, "I've engaged one at the inn. You'll be pretty well crowded here, and, as I told you, I prefer it down in the town. More independent, you see."

The other, likewise accustomed to plain speaking, responded that Bruce could suit himself, and walked away. Left alone, the young man stepped into a billiard room that opened upon the balcony. For a few moments he touched the balls idly, his stroke singularly firm and caressing; then he set himself a most difficult test. The balls scampered around the table wildly, came together gently and finally nestled, almost touching. An instant he regarded them, as if well satisfied with the accuracy of his eye, the sureness of his nerves, then leaned on his cue. His shapely, yet muscular fingers, showing slightly the scratches from his vain endeavor to break through the hedge back of Mr. Wood's place, held his attention; he regarded the marks with an intentness that told he was thinking deeply. At the same time his expression seemed one of alertness, that of some woodland creature intent upon an unexpected sound or interruption, real or fancied, in his forest fastness. A faint indentation appeared on his brow; he looked out through the screened door to where, afar, a dark fringe marked the outline of the forest on the green hillside.

Someone passed on the lawn below, a person with a dark face; viewed profilewise, it might have seemed the set, bronze countenance of an American Indian. From Bruce's point of view the slant eyes were hardly discernible. This person, like the workman who had gone down a short time before, carried a bundle. He went by like a shadow, with a characteristic gliding motion, around a corner of the house, and a few moments later, from presumably kitchenward—the big house had a half-open summer kitchen—came a grudging voice that greeted this last comer. It was better late than never—the speaker was the housekeeper, no doubt—though things had come to a pretty pass when one was glad to get even heathen for servants in the country. There were Irish gardeners, an English coachman, German and Swedish house maids, and this latest arrival constituted a second Oriental for the kitchen

or to serve the guests. The house might soon be compared to the Tower of Babel. Did he know how to "wait on" people? The answer was not discernible to Bruce; he seemed in no wise amused. The tones died away; silence ensued. Apparently had the belated one merged quietly into his place after the deft way of his kind; henceforth there would be no ruffling of the surface on his account. He was now but a cog that moved without friction.

Bruce had started to turn once more to the billiard table, when from down the road came a rattling of wheels. A vehicle drew near, drove into the grounds and stopped. It was one of the antiquated "hacks" from the station, but the gay garments of her with-in brightened it. She sprang out with a fluttering of skirts and ran up the steps.

"How do you do, Miss Burke?" Chatfield Bruce had stepped out through a long French window onto the balcony, and stood there, cue in hand.

"Mr. Bruce!" A faint flush came to the creamy cheek, an instant's perturbation to the greenish eyes. "I didn't expect—"

"Don't say it!" he laughed.

"Then I won't." She bit her lip as if momentarily annoyed, then laughed, too. "Of course, I should have expected you here if I had given the matter any thought."

"Quite so," he said easily. And then—"Pardon me!" reaching before her to touch the bell of the front door.

"Thanks." She suddenly, as if by an irresistible impulse, looked at him, had he been watchful now, he might have seen in that glance something to ponder over. It might have been likened to the casual light on a gun that betrays to the observant scout the hostile outpost in the deep gloaming. But Bruce had not seen; his manner had relaxed, become careless, unmindful. The front door of the house opened; he heard skipping, girlish steps within and a moment later the sound of Miss Flossie's ardent kisses.

III

CHATFIELD BRUCE stood a little aside from the merry throng in a slightly secluded angle of the house to observe the sunset. Then he abruptly wheeled. As he stirred, someone in the shadow, not far off, who had been observing him, also moved. The young man seemed not to have noticed this person, a detective, Bolger by name, employed by Mr. Samuel Page to trace his lost bonds. An "imperial" adorned Mr. Bolger's chin, and a mustache, conservatively French, his upper lip.

The detective's gaze was puzzled, as Mr. Bruce walked away; he peered down the hill below, where the young man had been standing, but only the spectral trees and the dim landscape afar met his look. He fancied that in one of the bushes half discernible below he could hear a sound as of a person moving, but was not sure. He concluded at length that it was only the rustling of the leaves, and turned to the grosser flare of the artificial lights in lamps and lanterns now illuminating the grounds and gardens.

He saw Bruce again, his face no longer wearing that intent, rapt look, but marked with an expression at once light and conventional, withal, keenly alert. While Chatfield Bruce's lips breathed witticisms or permitted themselves platitudes, his eyes seemed to see, to telegraph a good deal to his brain. He talked now to Colonel Manyan, and Mr. Bolger vaguely felt that the young fellow was intuitively weighing, considering the rough and the fine points of that particular individuality. Why? Through a habit of quiet analysis?

The military, or ex-military man—he had retired, or been retired from the army—seemed rather an important person, a bachelor. Financial adversity had, the detective knew, buzzed about his ears; he appeared, however, one not easily abashed by creditors. His bearing was more erect than that of many people who pay their bills. Bolger approached; while seeming to study the architectural outlines of the

new house, he strove to catch their words. He heard but part of them. Their conversation was conventional; it bore upon Uncle Sam's bizarre little group of islets in the Far East. Then the tones of others intervened—among them Miss Flossie Burke's. That young woman talked gaily; the observer noticed, however, a slight irrelevancy in her replies, and became also presently aware that she took a furtive interest in something or somebody beyond those she conversed with.

The green eyes, lifting capriciously now this way, then that, seemed to focus for a moment on the clean cut profile of Chatfield Bruce. Bolger looked thoughtfully down. When he lifted his gaze again Bruce had gone; perhaps it was a part of his social policy to bestow upon anyone but a few moments of his time and attention. Miss Flossie Burke, however, still remained near; she was not conversing quite so fast as she had been; the least constraint had fallen on her gaiety. Bolger now studied an almost intangible petulance of the girl's full lips; then his eyes, shifting, met those of Mr. Goldberg not far from them.

There was a faintly preoccupied expression on that person's face; the observer could guess at the cause. Had the host become somewhat anxious at Sir Archibald's nonappearance? No doubt he had given one or two of his guests to infer that the Englishman was going to be there, and the news had become disseminated throughout the gathering. People had glanced quickly, questioningly, at every newcomer; the late arrivals fell under a mild bane of silent disapproval because they were not someone else.

Mr. Bolger was also slightly disappointed. He had wanted to see the distinguished visitor. The latter's acceptance of the invitation to be present at Mr. Goldberg's that evening the detective had regarded as a fortunate coincidence; he even found in it subject for thought. There were acts with in acts in this drama which he did not understand. He wanted to converse with Miss Burke, to become acquainted

with her, but he refrained for reasons of prudence; that young woman might have heard his voice once or twice on other occasions. Her faculties were keen; so he discreetly annexed unto himself a gossipy old dowager, and asked her to supper, which was now announced.

Chatfield Bruce had been delegated to take Miss Goldberg in—or rather out, for the elaborate collation was served out of doors, beneath the greenwood trees. There were buffets and many tables that would accommodate from six to eight or ten guests. Mr. and Mrs. Goldberg, the latter a refined, pretty woman, were at one of the tables, and the former called upon Mr. Bruce and his daughter to join them. Bolger found another table close by.

At Mr. Goldberg's table were, also, Miss Flossie Burke, Colonel Manyan, and two other couples. Miss Burke, who was opposite Mr. Bruce and Miss Goldberg, regarded them with seemingly casual, though really sharp scrutiny. Miss Goldberg would have been generally considered merely "nice-looking," but the ornaments she wore were regal.

"Are they real?" The voice must have belonged to one of those "jokers" of whom Mr. Goldberg had spoken.

The company, moved by the daring facetiousness of the remark, laughed. "How about it, Mr. Bruce?" The jovial one on the other side of the hostess, was a short, red-faced man, the head of a big wholesale establishment, a block below Mr. Goldberg's on Broadway. "You're nearest them."

Between Bruce and the detective a vase of flowers on the latter's table intervened; Bolger moved it slightly, as if unconsciously. He discerned the other's now grave features, his earnest downward look toward the somewhat embarrassed, not wholly displeased, Miss Goldberg. "They appear so to me," said the young man quietly, in the tone of one who felt perhaps that the conversation had taken a turn in rather questionable taste.

But others were not so fastidious. "Are you a judge?" Colonel Manyan,

next to Miss Burke, asked in his habitually loud military manner; he had been partaking rather freely of the punch and champagne.

Bruce met his gaze. A slight impediment in the other's accents impressed itself on the young man accustomed to note trifles. In his youth the Colonel had probably been a stammerer. He had cured himself almost; only in moments of excitement or alcoholic stimulation a trace of the old affliction became manifest. "Are you a judge?" he repeated.

"That depends," Bruce said lightly.

"Upon what?" Miss Flossie leaned forward.

"Upon what you would call a 'judge,'" Chatfield Bruce smiled back at her. "Pearl collecting," he went on, toying with his *boutonnière*, "is rather too expensive a hobby for many of us. Outside of the buyers and sellers actually in the pearl business, there are not many, I fancy, who can claim to be real experts."

"Right!" Colonel Manyan's accents rang out. "Nevertheless, some of us think we are versed. In my own time I have seen a lot of fine pearls, many the best product of the Sulu seas; and allow me to observe"—he turned to Mr. Goldberg—"your daughter's seem truly magnificent, transcendently lovely." The long word cost him a slight effort. "That is," he added with a laugh, "from this distance."

"Oh, they won't look any worse close up," retorted the proud owner. "Those pearls will bear inspection. My dear," he said to his daughter, "let Colonel Manyan see them."

At his table Bolger started slightly and shifted the vase of flowers further aside. Miss Goldberg unclasped the shining rope; it slid from her hand over the military man's outstretched fingers. Colonel Manyan's gaze lighted up. "By Jove!" he said.

"Ever see anything finer?" Mr. Goldberg demanded, leaning back.

"Never!" Some of the vibrant quality had gone out of the Colonel's voice. "By Jove!" he repeated, thickly, almost in a murmur.

"May I see them?" Miss Flossie's breath seemed to come a little faster.

"Certainly; pass them along," said the owner.

Colonel Manyan released them reluctantly; the girl gave a rapturous exclamation:

"Ah!" The pearls nestled in her rosy palm. "How nice they feel!"

"Put them on," said Goldberg.

"No, no! It would be so hard to take them off!" She made a gesture. "Begone, temptation!"

The rope of pearls went now to Chatfield Bruce. The young fellow had moved his chair slightly away from the table. A servant was just filling his glass, the one that contained a light claret, for Bruce had not touched his champagne. This servant was swarthy, an Oriental, a Chinaman. He stood back now in the half-light without motion; only a slight sheen on some silk material he wore varied with the flutterings of the night wind. Behind, the lanterns on the tree branches seemed imbued with a sudden spirit of life; they waved, danced; trailing shadows ran this way and that. Bruce glanced at the pearls.

"There is one test," he said lightly, "you might have applied." His shoulder turned slightly from Mr. Goldberg; the necklace flashed in the air; lights gleamed on it. His fingers, somewhat scratched, caught Miss Flossie's eyes, but the expression of his face, that had been conventionally *nonchalant*, now arrested and held Bolger's glance.

Against a darker background Bruce's features seemed chiseled with cameo-like distinctness. A light that comes of the calm contemplation of the faultlessly beautiful shone for a second time that evening from his eyes; they seemed to caress, without covetousness, the pure, iridescent spheres, to linger on them with a high, unselfish delight. The pleased curvings of his fine lips paid them tribute.

"Two rings, one within another, on every perfect globule," they heard him say in low tones. Then he paused, and got up, as if the better to return the ornaments to their owner. His tall

figure threw a shadow across the lawn; he was smiling once more down upon the people at the table. "The test is not infallible, but—"

With a quick, gallant gesture, he was about to replace the rope on Miss Goldberg's neck, when his purpose was accidentally arrested. The Chinaman, apparently mindful only of glasses that needed replenishing, had stretched out his arm toward the delicate crystal between that young lady and Bruce; but instead of filling the glass, the Oriental had suddenly straightened.

The sound of a voice—a footstep behind—caused him to throw a quick glance over his shoulder. The abrupt movement brought him in sharp contact with Bruce's arm; a few drops of wine splashed upon the young man's sleeve.

The Oriental, recovering himself, bent very low, murmuring an abject apology. A frown sprang to Bruce's face; he said something hastily, in some dialect, his tones sharply rasping. Bolger would have given much to have known what it was. The detective had at that instant involuntarily risen from his seat. What was happening? Was anything happening—of moment? A puff of wind agitated the lanterns; one or two went out. Along the horizon the vague warmth of heat lightning made itself manifest; a hemlock on the second stood out with spectral-like vividness.

Bolger's pulses beat faster. Around him heads began unaccountably to nod this way and that, as if a gust of air had affected them; a murmur rose. What was it? What were the people at his table saying? Chatfield Bruce yet held the pearls, the wonderful white, glowing pearls; but a few moments had elapsed since he had taken them.

"Sir Archibald! Sir Archibald!" Yes, that was what they were whispering—not exactly agog or agape—but curious, undeniably.

"Beastly motor broke down, don't you know. Deuced inconvenient! Sorry—very." A voice, broadly accented, slightly bored, fell upon grati-

fied ears; it was Sir Archibald himself who was speaking. Mr. Goldberg had not raised expectations in vain.

The Englishman came forward from the direction of the house, followed by the other late arrivals. Bolger's glance swerved an instant to him, then returned to Chatfield Bruce.

That gentleman no longer had the pearls; he had returned them to Miss Goldberg. There was no doubt about that; Bolger saw them very distinctly. He gave a half-sigh, as of relief; he had for the moment felt quite unlike himself. Decidedly, the Page case had got on his nerves: yes, decidedly, he said in his own mind, as the host's daughter, moving with a proud inner consciousness of the fortune she again wore on her neck, stepped forward with her parents to greet Sir Archibald and those who had come with him.

IV

MR. BRUCE held back; he even perhaps showed a tendency to withdraw a little. But no one regarded him; the last arrivals—Sir Archibald and his explanations, which he, in the same language and the same cold, monotonous tones, reiterated several times—absorbed general attention.

Bruce's expression seemed only that of a person listening courteously, observing conventionally a scene in which he had no great concern. His eyes passed casually over Mr. Wood and lingered but a moment on Sir Archibald; yet in that brief period his gaze appeared to harden. Or was it only the light of one of the lamps, shining on his features, that threw a glint like a spark from his look? It faded almost immediately as he turned away. From beyond the house came the pounding of the engine of a car; someone was endeavoring to repair a defect in the mechanism of the motor that had finally conveyed Sir Archibald thither.

"How delightfully unaffected Sir Archibald appears—just like one of us!" the dowager, Mr. Bolger's companion, remarked enthusiastically.

Sir Archibald was, in his heavy way, very courteous to all, notably to Miss Goldberg, regal with gems.

"But what a magnet, those pearls, for whoever took the Morrow emeralds and the Page bonds!" went on the dowager. "That subtle and mysterious person whose detection is so much desired!"

Chatfield Bruce moved further away; the supper was practically over and Miss Goldberg evinced an unmistakable desire to attach herself to Sir Archibald. Miss Marjorie Wood's eyes chanced to rest on him and expressed recognition. He came forward at once; there was nothing else to do. Did she, however, divine from his manner what had been his intention, notice even now an instant's hesitation in moving toward her—she, who was accustomed to being seen first, and sought out, too, by those with whom she was acquainted, however slightly?

The hint of coldness in Miss Wood's blue eyes soon vanished. The young man laughed it down; he seemed to charm her as he did so many others. His greeting of Sir Archibald was easy and conventional; his long, slim fingers met the big ones of the other with apparent glad frankness; the gaiety on Bruce's features contrasted with the stolid reticence of the Briton.

"You and Bruce should enjoy knowing each other," Mr. Wood, a refined-looking man of about sixty, said in his friendliest fashion. "You have something in common—the Orient; I have noticed that people who have lived long in the Far East seem to like to get together, to exchange odd experiences, no doubt."

The younger man disclaimed any adventures out of the ordinary. Mr. Wood, as if pleased by this modesty, smiled indulgently. He and Bruce were members of the same club; the elder had rather sought out the other on occasions, finding him interesting to talk to, when he *would* talk. He appeared disposed to do so now; in fact, exerted himself and was at his best. Mr. Wood laughed, but Sir Archibald's face remained sphinxlike.

Miss Marjorie responded lightly to the greetings. Her look swept the gaily lighted grounds, the big house with every window agleam, then returned to the damask-spread board, the half-filled glasses. "I'm afraid we have interrupted your little table party."

"Not at all; we were only admiring Miss Goldberg's pearls, passing them around, you know."

"Indeed!" Miss Wood herself wore no ornaments.

"And Mr. Bruce was just alluding to some test, or something of the kind." Sir Archibald looked around.

"Mr. Bruce!" Marjorie Wood's tones conveyed an accent of surprise. "Then, that was what he appeared so taken with when we came up that when the servant brushed against him, he—"

"Dropped upon Miss Goldberg's neck!" laughed Flossie Burke.

"No; I meant—I thought—"

"Isn't it charming—the arrangement of the grounds, I mean—that pavilion for dancing?" Sir Archibald had taken a step or two in their direction and directed his remark to Miss Wood. "A pavilion—just fancy!"

As he spoke he twirled his heavy mustache, while his lazy eyes, slightly expectant, turned now to Miss Burke; she, among many others, had not yet been presented to him. If the observer wanted a reason for the Englishman's rather abrupt action at the moment, here was a simple one. Miss Flossie's charms were unmistakable; she at once began to entertain Sir Archibald, her manner that of society, a haphazard, frothy way of talking *at* not *to* one.

The host's bass voice, calling for chairs and another table to be placed against the one from which they had risen, broke in upon them, and they seated themselves again.

Senhor Cagliani appeared presently. Undersized, wiry, the secretary carried himself with an odd briskness. A black beard adorned a countenance at once swarthy and secretive. With all his assumption of a Portuguese ancestry, there was something un-European about him. Perhaps that alien intima-

tion lay in the eyes that offered to the observer only the surface lights of dark, shining beads, and, yes, conveyed in their setting, though remotely, some reminder of a "slant." He held himself with an assurance in the least forced, and, when the host made him acquainted with those at the table, bowed to each after the ceremonious fashion of the East. As he regarded the people, however, his gaze lacked in steadfastness; this was especially marked when the host called Bruce by name.

"The motor has been repaired, Sir Archibald," Caglioni murmured, taking a place near the foot of the table.

"Good! My secretary is quite a mechanic," explained Sir Archibald. "Couldn't resist helping overhaul the parts, don't you know."

"Mechanic?" observed Mr. Wood lightly. "And a linguist, a stenographer and a sportsman! A man of many accomplishments!" he added.

"A sportsman?" exclaimed Miss Burke vivaciously.

Mr. Wood laughed. "Don't know as I ought quite to call the señor that, though! He put in a good part of today among the tangles and underbrush of my place, but brought back only one solitary bunny."

The señor made a deprecatory shrug. "I am not a very good shot."

"Aren't you?" Bruce had turned and was looking at him curiously; then his gaze became more distant, as if some far-away baffling impression had suddenly assailed him. An instant and he regained his customary light poise. "Your place, Mr. Wood, or the rear of it, looks a likely spot for poachers—"

"As a matter of fact, it is inaccessible," Mr. Wood replied. "You may not have noticed, just walking by." Again Bruce's eyes lifted to Caglioni, and he drummed with his fingers on the table.

The evening wore on. Bruce talked very little now; the wine before him, neglected, had long since ceased to effervesce and became but a flat golden surface. On Marjorie Wood's cheeks

the rosebuds that had unfolded their hues to the rush of the night wind on the way thither had deepened; she was speaking; he, resting his head on his hand, seemed content to look at her and listen.

Across the lawn a faint mist, the end of a cloud hanging low, passed like a wraith; in the grass a sibilant sound of insects mingled with the human murmur. A waltz, the "Merry Widow," struck up. All with one accord deserted the buffets and tables. As they passed toward the pavilion, the watchful Bolger saw Senhor Caglioni leave his chair to speak to his employer. But, although his lips addressed Sir Archibald, the secretary's gaze caressed furtively the rope on Miss Goldberg's neck, and the pupils of his brown eyes seemed slowly to dilate. The detective, who saw, experienced a momentary wonder, half apprehension. What did it mean? At that moment Chatfield Bruce, with Miss Wood at his side, each mindful only of the other, stepped lightly toward the dancers.

V

BRUCE guided faultlessly without effort. The young man was pagan in his appreciation of certain forms of dancing and rhythm; the motion epics of the Far East, based on the varying moods of nature, were for him an especial delectation. He gazed down at the girl's face, so near his shoulder, and experienced an unreasoning pleasure, yes, joy; he did not know why; he did not care. It did not admit of argument or reason. It was as if, standing at the foot of the steps of a temple on the dull banks of the Pei-ho, in the first flush of youth's golden dream, he had been about to embark, when at the river's edge he saw her, with hair dark as an Eastern princess's and eyes like the blue flowers that lie in the desert beyond the walled cities—saw her and took her with him, wherever that might be!

It happened like something out of space, out of time—like the birth of a

star or the death of one! Only the environment now, the actual surrounding figures, seemed unreal, wooden. His eyes had a new ardor. An odd sense of possession dominated him. She was his—his! Did he not always attain what he coveted? His! He drew her closer, very gently, so gently that she did not seem to notice. Oh, for the magic carpet of China, that might whisk them up to the plain of Han, the sea of stars! But one could take, carry off what was of great worth without Oriental sorcery! If he only would— One—two—three, the rhythms continued.

Marjorie Wood had always enjoyed waltzing. After the first few tentative moments, the important, crucial test of her partner, she had resigned herself to Bruce with confidence. He looked down at blue eyes like bright, merry flowers now, dancing in the breeze. The parted red lips were curved to a smile; a flying tress of dark hair touched his cheek. The music came to an end. She regarded Chatfield Bruce blithely; he had not disappointed her.

"Thank you!" Mocking irony, futility of words, though he bent to the part with eyes agleam.

"I enjoyed it," she said simply.

Her small, white-gloved hand rested now on his arm; she found herself walking away with him quite naturally across the lawn, through shaded paths to the verge of the more thickly wooded park. She hardly noted which way they went. Now he talked—joyous, fantastic nonsense, like a boy. She answered, unreasoningly vibrant, responsive to his mood, as if some of the magic of the night had crept into and swayed her thoughts, too. Now and then she looked at him with eyes a little questioning, whimsically surprised, as if asking, was this the incisive, sometimes ironical man of the world she had conceived him to be? Did he read between her blithe words the intrusive query? If so, he swept it aside and continued to lead her on arbitrarily, with implied authority. Her hand, like a lily leaf, seemed about to fall from his black sleeve. He looked at it;

it yet lingered—though so lightly, as if it might float off and away forever in an instant.

They paused at length where the bank descended precipitately. How beautiful was the valley, sleeping beneath its diaphanous mantle of haze! How far away the world, typified by the concourse of small red dots of light, human habitations! The gay words died on the girl's lips; her gaze, beneath sweeping lashes, looked out from shadows of ineffable dreaminess. Bruce too, ceased to speak, but the glad light of his glance rested on the pale, perfect contour of her face, the hair, black as the wing of a night bird. He, who a few moments before had held her in his arms, a white-robed, youthful Aphrodite, radiating with life, would not now have dared to touch her; yet a spell of wonderful nearness seemed to have fallen on them, to hold them so still—a moment, an eternity!

Below, a stone or bit of gravel became loosened and fell. She stirred; their glances met. A brighter, more intense light shone abruptly from his, as if the glad, diffused rays were suddenly gathered and focused into points of fire and warmth, that played on her like a clear white flame, sending with disconcerting swiftness a flood of color to her cheeks, stirring fuller, stronger pulsations from finger tips to throat, awakening something beneath her breast that beat hard, wildly! Loud, loud sang the insects; their rhythmic intonations seemed to fill the land. Afar, the wood appeared to fade away; only the trees, near at hand, were very insistent, very black, and yet unreal, too, as if with their upcurving branches they had been metamorphosed into many-storied pagodas, standing in some Eastern garden, full of odors and strange fragrances. Out of the night she heard her name whispered—or was it but fancy?

Nearby, a distinct sound, the sharp cracking of a branch, broke startlingly upon the stillness. Again—as if a footfall in the wooded park close to them had encountered a dead limb on the ground. She looked that way; her

hand brushed her brow. Stepping toward them from beneath one of the pagodalike trees she saw a dark form that stopped and seemed to hesitate at sight of them, then came forward and turned, acting as if he had not observed them, and stole with quick, now noiseless tread toward the brightly lighted house. The reflection of pale rays played on him, the curious profile with high cheekbones, the glittering eyes—then he was gone.

"Why"—she gave an odd little laugh—"that was a Chinaman!"

"One of the servants." Bruce suddenly straightened, throwing back his head, as if at the same time to throw something from him. "Mr. Goldberg has several of them."

"How strange—" The words died away.

"On the contrary, they make excellent servants."

"I mean his appearing like that, from the—"

"My dear Miss Wood"—the voice was Sir Archibald's; he had approached from the direction opposite that in which they were looking—"I have been searching for you everywhere, to claim my dance, don't you know."

Bruce laughed lightly; his eyes now had the cold gleam of a scimiter in the moonlight.

"The dance is half over," Sir Archibald went on.

Marjorie Wood turned. "I am sorry." In her voice was an accent of constraint.

"The fault is mine," murmured Bruce.

Sir Archibald did not answer, but held out his arm stiffly. With a quick backward glance the girl moved toward him, and Bruce watched them walk away.

When, a short time later, he again started toward the house, the lawn was nearly deserted. Toward the west a bank of black clouds had blotted out the stars; a faint reverberation, afar, made itself heard.

"A penny for your thoughts!" The voice was Miss Burke's; she had stepped

softly to his side from the buffet, where a number of couples yet lingered. "But perhaps you are wondering with the others," not awaiting his answer, "what Sir Archibald's mission to this country may be!"

"Sir Archibald's mission?" He looked at her quickly with, she might almost have fancied, swift inquiry.

"A tender one, if rumor can be relied on!" Her laugh sounded the least bit artificial. "He met Miss Wood first in Europe," she continued.

He did not answer. Did she find his silence disappointing—as if something she had reached for had proved illusory?

"It may be, though, that you know more of Sir Archibald's mission than the rest of us."

"I?"

"As a friend of Mr. Wood."

"Acquaintance," he corrected.

"Oh!" Her glance swung toward the platform; again he suffered the silence to grow. Her foot tapped the earth and her brows drew together. "Do you see that person over there?" she said suddenly.

"What person?" Her backward glance had been swift, significant.

"The French-looking one, with the imperial, standing near the platform; he is watching Miss Goldberg—or the pearls! That," she added sharply, as noting the effect of her words on him, "is Mr. Bolger."

"Bolger?"

"You have never heard of him?"

"Is he," he asked perfunctorily, "a detective?"

Miss Burke's laugh rang out. It was rather a peculiar laugh, caressing or cruel—one could hardly tell which. The red moon played on her white shoulders. "Did I ever speak to you about that drawing left in my uncle's box when the bonds were taken? It might have represented," she said with mischievous maliciousness, "a camel and a needle's eye—though the police could make nothing of it. Well, my uncle lost it; someone took it," she concluded with a peculiar accent. "But you are not interested?"

"On the contrary," he answered patiently.

"Perhaps," she observed more quickly, "he who left the drawing in Mr. Page's box would be interested—I mean if he knew that it may prove of importance yet in the case. Although neither Mr. Bolger nor my uncle noted at the time that bit of paper *did* bear something distinguishing, incriminating." Did he start now, at last? She was not sure; his countenance in the shadow could hardly be seen.

"Let us hope you are right," he smiled. "If I were to give you any advice, it would be to guard carefully that paper."

The reply that sprang to her lips was interrupted; with a sudden exclamation, half apprehensively she caught his arm. A zigzag fork of lightning was launched unexpectedly from the sky; it left the eyes dazzled, almost blinded; at the same time the summer squall that had been gradually drawing nearer suddenly broke. The wind dissipated the dancers and played havoc with the festoons of flowers, the electric bulbs and the many Chinese lanterns. It tore some of the last, lighted with candles, from the trees and sent them scurrying hither and thither. A few caught fire, soared across the lawn like great blazing beetles, and vanishing over the hilltop, were lost in the night.

Under the shelter of a tree, Bruce, with Miss Flossie clinging closer, stood a moment watching those who hurried from the platform.

"It is such a moment as this," the young man laughed, "that he to whom you referred just now would avail himself of for his nefarious purpose!"

As he spoke, his eyes rested on Miss Goldberg, running with Senhor Caglioti toward the house. But his glance lingered only an instant on her, then passed to one behind, gay as a nymph laughing at the terrors of the storm god. For Miss Wood the squall was a diverting incident, fitting, it may be, her mood, now mercurial, restless, welcoming any change.

A second Bruce saw her thus, a fleet,

blithe vision. Coming after her, Sir Archibald, fine-looking but heavy, was somewhat too far behind for the buoyant cavalier the moment seemed to call for. For the part of a second, the flash of Bruce's gaze thus perceived her; and then something startling, unlooked for, altered the picture.

One of the lanterns, a flaming mass of paper, swept directly toward her. The burning tissue, caught in the gusts, seemed to spring almost viciously at her. The wind held it to her gown. She tried to brush it away, but in vain; her dress, of the filmiest material, in turn became ignited.

Miss Flossie Burke heard Chatfield Bruce say something, felt his arm fiercely whipped from her fingers, which had involuntarily closed upon it. What followed afterwards she hardly knew. She saw only in her bewilderment a turmoil of people, one more conspicuous than the others, who threw off his coat and wrapped it around the flames, beating them with his hands.

His movements had been lightning-like; she had scarcely followed them. He was kneeling on the grass now, striking in that same fierce manner with the incredible swiftness she was vaguely cognizant of when he had torn himself away from her. Sir Archibald, too, lent his assistance—rather late, Miss Burke afterwards remembered thinking.

VI

It all happened very quickly and was soon over; what harm had been done remained to be seen. Miss Flossie with others pressed excitedly forward. Was he much injured, badly burned? She had seen his hands and arms enveloped by the flames. None noted the shape her inquiries took nor the excess of agitation in the girl's greenish eyes. She and a number of others were waved back. Authority stepped in; among the guests was a doctor.

Miss Wood, happily, proved to have been unharmed by the flames, but Mr. Bruce had suffered a few actual injuries; his right hand, especially,

showed several bad burns. He, however, made light of it.

The hand was duly bound and bandaged, whereupon Bruce announced his intention of returning to his inn in the village. To this Mr. Wood offered strenuous objections. The least he, Mr. Wood, could do under the circumstances, he asserted, was to offer the young man the hospitality of his home not far distant. To permit Bruce to walk down to the tavern in the town in his condition was not to be thought of. The young man needed care and attention. His grip or trunk could be sent for at the inn. So, willy-nilly, not long after, he found himself carried off as Mr. Wood's guest, and Mr. Bolger, who had both heard and seen, stared after the young man when he had really gone or been whisked away.

It may be the detective reflected at the moment on the irony of circumstances. Here was the *mauvais sujet* of his investigations set on the pedestal of a Hector! Anger and chagrin mingled in his emotions. He, too, took his departure. He had no further interest in the pearls that night; they were safe. The garden party was practically over; this little *contretemps* had taken the edge off further merrymaking.

Chatfield Bruce, between Miss Wood and her father on the rear seat of the car, was whirled on. He said nothing, nor did they, after a few desultory remarks, speak; a tacit silence seemed to have taken possession of them.

The car at length drew up at the Wood mansion. As Bruce got out he was dimly aware that the squall, passing with its fierce patter of rain, had left the night more beautiful than before; every cloud, every convolution of mist had been driven from the sky; the stars were almost too bright.

It was Bamford himself who assisted Miss Wood from the car; she went toward the house with him and his secretary and waited at the top of the steps for her father and Mr. Bruce. Mr. Wood paused to speak to the chauffeur, telling him to go down to the tavern in the village for his guest's luggage, whereupon the latter intervened. It

was late now, he observed—after midnight; landlord and help went to bed early in these country inns, but got up with the sun. The next morning the chauffeur could procure for him whatever he might need. Mr. Wood listened courteously to these remarks and bade his man consider them his instructions. The young man lingered yet a moment, and glanced about him as if to convey to his mind an impression of the outer aspect of the house, spacious and rambling, and the grounds surrounding it, then followed his host in.

Passing up the broad staircase leading to the second story, Mr. Wood showed his guest into a great chamber in the wing. It was rather remote, he remarked, throwing open the glass doors leading to a veranda, but its quietude commended it for a guest a "little done up." He laid his hand for a moment on Bruce's shoulder. He would send at once his man, Simpson, with dressing gown and other little necessities.

The young man seated himself in the center of the room and waited. On the mantel a clock ticked loudly. "After twelve!"— After twelve!"— the pendulum seemed to beat the words. Simpson was slow—an English servant, no doubt. An irregularity in the hand woven rug at his feet caught his keen glance. Why had the Oriental workman turned this one detail upside down? To differentiate from a factory fabric, or through mere childish whimsicality?

"After twelve—after twelve"— A loud, persistent little clock, it had a very pronounced way of telling off the seconds; how rapidly they were passing! Bruce stirred; someone rapped, entered—Simpson.

He was well laden, with this and that dangling on one arm, and a vase of roses held to him. He laid over the back of a chair the articles that dangled—"Mr. Wood's compliments," and placed on a table the flowers—"Miss Wood's compliments." There was nothing else Bruce required; Simpson could go. Only, a last injunction: let no one rap on the door in the morning;

if he might sleep late, he wished to. When Simpson had gone, the young man stepped to the table, bent over the flowers and breathed deeply, then suddenly straightened. The receding footsteps had died away; he was alone.

But was he? On the veranda he fancied he heard a slight noise and went swiftly to the long glass doors opening upon it. Drawing aside the curtains, which closed behind him, he stepped out. Only the shadows met his gaze; against the rail a branch, swayed by the wind, grated. It was that sound he had heard; his eyes, sweeping along the veranda, striving to penetrate the surrounding darkness, could detect no human form. The rain had enhanced the fragrance from the garden below; the sweet odor of her flowers seemed augmented a hundredfold to assail him with a sense-drugging perfume. He could almost forget the burning sensation of pain. The insect tones that pierced the air were as shrill as those in the spirit-haunted forests of the Shoguns. His glance swept toward the trees confronting him now; he looked down toward the ground. His next move, sudden, unexpected, that of one who had made up his mind to some hazardous course, would have greatly surprised Mr. Wood or his daughter, could they have seen it; two other members of the household, perhaps, would not have been so amazed.

When Chatfield Bruce was shown by Mr. Wood to his room, Cagliani and Sir Archibald, after wishing Miss Wood good night, passed into those apartments reserved for their accommodations at the other end of the hall. Bamford, with a significant look at his secretary, left the door of his sitting room partly ajar; then he motioned Senhor Cagliani to sit at a table commanding a view of the door of the distant apartment into which Bruce had been ushered for the night. Bamford himself sank into a chair, with his back to his own threshold and the hall, lighted a cigar and bent over a Chinese checkerboard of many squares that lay

on the table. The attitude of the two was characteristic—Sir Archibald introspective, seemingly unaware of extraneous details, the secretary alert, alive, his mood distinctly objective.

"Tell me when Mr. Wood comes out," observed the Baronet, apparently engrossed only in the men on the board.

It was a game he and his secretary often played at night before retiring, even to the wee hours, a complicated pastime invented by a complex people. But this evening Sir Archibald and Cagliani—who had now slipped into a business suit—made but a pretense of playing. The Englishman smoked fast; his big fingers toyed only in desultory fashion with the small pieces.

Mr. Wood, Cagliani shortly afterwards murmured, had left Mr. Bruce's room. Simpson, the host's man, would no doubt soon repair thither, Sir Archibald answered in a low voice. Meanwhile they continued to wait, talking in suppressed tones.

The door of Cagliani's room commanded a view of the veranda? Yes. Then the secretary knew what he was to do; he must hold himself in readiness. It was really fortunate that circumstances had compelled Bruce to come here tonight. "What did you think of the pearls?" Bamford asked abruptly.

"*Ma foi!* Mr. Goldberg is wise," Cagliani laughed softly, "a veritable Nathan of his kind! The multitude gaze and admire; his daughter gets all the credit of being bedecked like a duchess; he rubs his hands and, *sapristi*, takes no risk."

"What do you mean?" Sir Archibald looked up quickly.

"That the Midas of lower Broadway emulates the example of the *noblesse* of Park Row or Kensington; he keeps the priceless gems under lock and key, and parades for the ignorant or uninformed—" He finished the sentence with a snap of the fingers.

The Baronet, although not prone to outward signs of emotion, started now. He forgot the pieces on the board and stared ahead through waves of smoke.

"*Diable!* You did not perceive?" Cagliani's hand waved airily.

The other's face wore a strange expression. "Not—that!" he said slowly. Then the hand over the board closed. "But why did you not tell me this before?"

"When you were with Miss Goldberg—in the automobile?" Caglioni's accents were furtively querulous. "Is it important?"

Sir Archibald did not answer at once. "You are sure?" he said at length.

"I"—he shrugged his shoulders—"with my experience—who once dealt in that very kind of merchandise? I could almost tell from what stream in the Celestial Kingdom those substitutes were taken."

Sir Archibald was silent. The secretary twitched nervously, then suddenly stiffened. "The man Simpson!" he half whispered, his tones tense, his eyes, no longer beadlike, but glittering like those of a viper. "He is going in."

"He will soon come out. And then—"

Caglioni glided into the room adjoining. Sir Archibald leaned back, as if surveying a strategic arrangement of the bits of stone on the board. Simpson at length came down the hall. Bamford closed his door leading to it, crossed to the secretary's chamber and entered. The apartment was vacant. Sir Archibald looked out upon the veranda; that, too, was now deserted. He fancied he saw something dark below, gliding toward, then into the forest, but was not sure. The leaves, wet with rain, glistened between; the cigar went out in his hand as his eyes continued to scrutinize the darkness.

VII

CHATFIELD BRUCE's procedure, that would have awakened the surprise of Mr. Wood, had he witnessed it, consisted of a series of odd acts. Re-entering quickly his room, the young man shot the bolt of the door leading into the hall, then stepped to the doors opening onto the veranda. A key on the inside of one of them he took out and placed on the outside, and was

about to leave the chamber once more when he paused. His glance swerved involuntarily back; some new thought seemed to move him. Crossing the apartment again, he pushed the bolt from the detaining clasp, fastened that door with the key and then slipped the latter into his pocket, after which, adjusting the curtains carefully before the double glass doors, so that no one without could see in, he returned to the balcony, drew those doors to, locked them and kept possession of that key also.

At one end of the upper veranda was a heavy trelliswork which he had foreseen might serve his purpose. Now, by its aid, he let himself down from the balcony to the ground. It was not easy to do so; he experienced a consciousness of taxing his less injured left hand almost beyond endurance. He endeavored, however, to set aside the pain with a kind of Manchu fortitude, to call whimsically to mind at the moment a Far Eastern stoicism.

In spite of the danger and tenseness of the moment, he could smile at his thoughts; he was still very young; the Old East had not aged him; the ingenuousness of the West yet vibrated in his being. He glanced toward a lighted curtain at the side of the house. Was it fancy, or had he detected for an instant the silhouette of a girl's head and shoulders passing thereon, the brief uplifting of an arm? Now the curtain was only blank, a dull yellow. One self of him seemed to crave no more than the privilege of standing there, to dream—sonnet-fashion, or in madrigals! Another self, acting subconsciously, it may be, made him acutely aware of a脚步—it was not a branch this time—on the veranda above. The sound acted like a stimulating tonic to that second self and transformed him into life and action; with senses alert, he moved swiftly from the house.

The earth was wet, soggy; but though he stepped with the lightness of a forest creature on soft, sodden leaves, the twigs on the ground broke beneath him. The sound might have

been heard by others, very attentive at the moment, but he did not look back. Had he done so, he would have noticed the yellow curtain he had been regarding thrust aside a little, in the thin slant of light a girl's face gazing out for an instant. Then the curtain fell back into place; the white gleam went, and the succeeding yellow, too.

Bruce plunged into the darkness. To all appearances he had been able to leave the house without attracting attention. Stopping many times, he could hear no one coming after him. He did not, however, tell himself with certainty that his absence would not be noticed, nor even that he would escape being followed. He did not underestimate a certain wakefulness and watchfulness under the circumstances on Sir Archibald's part; Bruce knew well that individual's reputation for alertness and persistency. Sir Archibald, in his capacity as private agent and adviser of His Majesty's government in the Far East, displayed the same traits that made him renowned as a pursuer of big game. He would wait for hours, days, on his platform for a tiger. He knew how to entice what he wished to bring down beneath his stand, or how to get others to "drive" for him—quick, agile ones like Cagliostro! Where had Bruce seen the secretary? A fugitive resemblance he had felt earlier in the evening again played hide and seek in the young man's brain. Even in this moment of excitation, he found himself trying to recall under what possible circumstances they could have met before.

He continued to move on; a lack of evidence that he was followed did not altogether serve to reassure him on that score. Of course, the possibility existed of the secretary's being ever closer than he thought; the slant eyes, with their suggestion of an ancestry not altogether Portuguese, recalled to him certain wonder tales of the East, of mysterious, half-human creatures, possessing the power to track others, dog humans, themselves always unseen, unheard.

Not long afterwards Bruce stood again

on the verge of the wooded park near the Goldberg mansion. The grounds were dark and deserted now. Against the sky the structure loomed, with only a few lights showing in its windows. A moment Bruce looked attentively around him, then glided silently into the dim wood. He remained there for some time, lost to sight, during which a figure looked furtively out from a black corner of the house in the direction he had gone.

The moments went by. Did the person lurking, watching, become impatient? Flat on the grass, he began to draw himself forward without sound; every muscle seemed trained for the sinuous movement. In the shadow of the platform he paused. Still he who had vanished into the wood did not reappear. How long it took him for what he had to do! The man on the grass again continued his progress forward, with singular swiftness over the more open places, where the starlight showed him a faint blotch on the earth. At length, reaching a shaded spot on the edge of the obscure fringe, he half raised himself; another stood suddenly at his side.

"What are you doing here?" Bruce asked harshly. "Do you not know the risk? You did all you should." He glanced over his shoulder toward the shaded park. "Why overdo your task?"

"I came, illustrious one," answered the man in Cantonese dialect, sitting now on his heels, "to warn against the English elephant here tonight, and that one who is with him, the brown fox! As the illustrious one knows, foxes are not good, and the elephant is the enemy of the Nine-Times-Nine in my country and in India, the lands of great Buddha."

"What have I to do with your Nine-Times-Nine," came in crisp tones from the young man, "or any other of your societies?"

"They have nothing to do with the illustrious one," said the man, bending humbly to the earth. "They never forget."

"It seems, then, I have vassals unto forever!"

"The master cannot escape gratitude."

"Any more than the illustrious ghosts, the perpetual, eulogistic tablets!"

"It is written," was the phlegmatic reply. "When the master, on the river of mist, that night in the waning evil of the moon, stepped between the traitor assassin and my father, the object of his vengeance—"

"Ah!" Bruce's eyes became on a sudden very keen and bright; he breathed deeply, as if exhilarated. "Did a beard, then, so blind me," he murmured to himself, "and a few years, that I could not recognize, even though I had felt the teeth—once? Here! Tell me, Ting's Younger Brother," he said aloud gaily, turning to the Oriental, "do foxes like rabbits?" The other pondered a moment, as though seeking in vain the answer to a parable. The young man did not wait for him to find a solution, but with sudden swiftness shifted the talk. "And it was the mere sight of the elephant that caused you to forget yourself and blunder like a child at the table tonight — you, who, it was thought, could always be depended upon."

"It was seeing him suddenly, over your shoulder, the enemy of our people! Why should he have come, and his servant, the unknown fox, unless they suspected, knew? I did not think the illustrious one would appear at the wood tonight according to the compact, after leaving tonight as he did—after what happened when the flame gods were angry!"

"Hush!" Bruce's eyes had turned toward the house, to a faintly lighted window where a dim figure seemed standing. A woman? Yes—robed in white!

"The witch—she who has stolen the eyes of the sacred green!" came in a sibilant whisper from the grass.

A spell of silence followed. The man in the grass suddenly shifted; his eyes burned.

"There is someone near, illustrious one!"

Bruce's hand went swiftly down to the shoulder of the crouching one. "What does—" He suppressed an exclamation; the fingers of his left hand bit into the hard flesh of the Oriental through the silky material that covered him. "What—"

The latter looked up, then glanced toward the house. "It sounded like a woman."

"You, too, heard then?" As he spoke, a light gleamed in another window.

"The witch is no longer there. It was she who called out—"

"But why?"

A strange, questioning look shone from Bruce's gaze; between him and the house a leaf fluttered, like a black butterfly, to the earth.

"Why?" he repeated. Suddenly the muscles beneath his hand stiffened; the man's head had shot forward. In the house something startling, unexpected was happening, had happened.

VIII

THE festivities over at the mansion on the hill, Mr. Goldberg put away the pearl rope carefully. The guests, staying in the house, had gone to their rooms; he, apparently, was the last to retire. He permitted himself the luxury of a last glance at the delicate-textured spheres before allowing them to slide, in all their translucent beauty, to the little pink cotton nest in one of the drawers in his new safe; then he closed the steel door and turned the knob to throw off the combination and slid over it the concealing oak paneling, a device of his architect.

A moment he stood in the dim light, and his thoughts seemed pleasant. The affair had been a great success. He thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and started to whistle an air from an Italian opera.

Beneath the door of the chamber beyond shone a light; this apartment was occupied for the time being because of the press of visitors.

"Not gone to bed yet, Miss Flossie?" the host buoyantly called out.

She answered, he couldn't quite hear what, for the door was heavy mahogany; then, stepping in an opposite direction, he passed through a bathroom, closing the door behind him, into his own sleeping apartment. He went to bed and slumbered heavily.

In her room Miss Flossie still sat up, her hair unbound, hanging around her. She was seated at a table, her chin resting on her bared arm, before her one or two papers and a photograph. Her brows were drawn. The paper engrossing her attention at the instant was the anonymous note Mr. Goldberg had received. She had laughingly asked the host's daughter to get it for her; she confessed lightly to all the curiosity of her sex.

She held the paper now to the light and compared it with another on the table containing one or two crude drawings—that might have been construed as a camel and a needle's eye. As she did so her eye kindled; something seemed to fascinate her gaze.

There was an indentation of a circle, with tiny keen points set about it, above a straight line, faint to the unaided vision, but plainly discernible by means of the strong glass through which she now regarded it. That circle and the straight line had been made inadvertently by someone leaning slightly on the paper. The impress was that of a ring she knew; and it belonged to Chatfield Bruce. She had often seen it on his finger—indeed, had asked what the symbol meant, and he had told her where he had got it and all it portended. A slight clue, perhaps, very slight; but men had been convicted on less evidence. She felt certain the sharp edges of the odd, most unusual design of the ring would fit absolutely that indentation, and the knowledge thrilled her with joyful malice and triumph. She allowed her gaze to linger—as though she had not studied the paper so often before! A few perfunctory little letters lay in front of her in Chatfield Bruce's hand, also a photograph of him.

Her face flushed as she thought how she had procured the last. A snap-

shot by a newspaper man, showing Mr. Bruce in an amateur athletic contest, she had begged, on some pretext or other from the editor to whom she surreptitiously furnished occasional spicy society items. Ah, she had been mad, mad! Was she so still?

This photograph now alone held her, to the exclusion, even, of the more significant detail her eyes, like a cat's, had a moment before sharpened upon. A certain dreaminess replaced the hard light; there were times when she did not know herself, moments such as these! She looked at the casual likeness of a lithe, splendid figure, straight as an Indian's, a masculine profile Phidias might have longed to copy, lips fine, expressive of determination, eyes alight with one purpose—to win. And he had won—though he had seemed to care so little afterwards! His gaze, then, wore that illusive, indifferent light she had become so accustomed to, even when she had turned to him in her most engaging manner. She regarded the definite evidence on the paper—for her to make use of some day as she saw fit or not. The alternative always came; she wondered why. Rising suddenly, she stepped to the window. She wanted to breathe more freely. She tore back the curtain and looked out into the night.

How lightly had he parried with her that evening and turned her words! Bolger—who was Bolger, indeed? As if he had not reason to know! But though Bruce had held her and her words and what lay beneath them with an indifference almost scornful, how swiftly he had turned to another when danger befell her, surmounted it, beat it out, regardless of injury or pain to himself! Again she seemed to see him as she had seen him then and before, in the dance with Marjorie Wood. The two had moved as though oblivious to the rest of the world! Did she, Flossie Burke, not know? Could she not divine? It was not hard to read the swift new interest in his glance, something stronger, more sedulous, than she had ever beheld there before, that seemed, as he held the girl's sien-

der form to him, to sweep down from the crown of dark hair dreamily, tenderly, over the beautiful, young face.

For Miss Wood was beautiful—Miss Flossie reluctantly conceded it; but men had also acknowledged her own charms on many occasions. That night she had had a circle around her; he, however, had not been of them. He had forgotten even to ask her to dance; he had preferred to stand off there near the park with Miss Wood.

It was different from the conversation that evening between him and herself. Once more she seemed to hear the mocking laughter of his words when he said that such a night as this he who had designs on the pearls would find to his liking for his nefarious purpose. The sentence, or what it implied, recurred to her again and again and brought more sharply to mind the precious ornaments. She, Flossie, had been one of the last that night to look on them, just before Miss Goldberg, about to retire, had reluctantly taken the pearls from her neck to give them to her father, who had put them away—where?

Miss Burke looked suddenly over her shoulder; a sound had caused her to turn. Was it in the great hall, or the anteroom adjoining? A door, she fancied, had opened and closed softly, as if someone had come into the anteroom from the hall. The host? He had but a short time before called out to her and retired. Of course, it could not be Mr. Goldberg—yet it must be! She remembered that the door from the anteroom to the hall was always kept locked; she had inadvertently tried it once or twice. Then, how could anyone have come in that way, unless—

She felt a sudden nervous excitement; her mood had been tense; she was in a highly imaginative state. Those last words of Chatfield Bruce continued to move trippingly through her brain; they would not leave her now. They seemed to say, locked doors would open readily to some people, deeply skilled, able to move silently, stealthily!

She was positive she heard a sound now of someone stirring softly. Her

heart beat faster. Was it—could he have come back? Impossible! And yet there was a glamour about him who had taken the Morrow emeralds, the Page bonds and many other valuables! Had he not achieved the seemingly impossible a number of times before that night? To return thus strangely, madly, to the Goldberg house would be in keeping with one as temerarious and devil-may-care as he was clever and ingenious. She endeavored to dismiss the fancy, when an indubitable faint clicking in the next room held her.

She trembled, but not altogether with fear, then moved, still as a ghost, from her window toward the door to the anteroom, and stood near it, motionless, her hand to her breast. Beneath her fingers came a wilder throbbing now; her fancy conveyed the picture to her mind. That faint clicking she had dimly caught before, when Mr. Goldberg had been in the anteroom—she divined now what it meant. Of course, Mr. Goldberg would have prepared a secure place for the pearls; and where else, naturally, than near his own bedroom?

There was a safe, presumably, not visible to the eye. When she had inspected that little room with the rest of the big house, no steel strong box was visible; but Flossie knew that people who had in their residences these awkward receptacles took the pains to have them set in somewhere out of sight, if not as a matter of precaution, then because bulky steel safes are not ornamental, and cannot be made to harmonize with Louis Quinze or Louis Seize furniture.

Click! In the stillness, straining to listen, she still was aware of the persistent little sound, no louder than beads dropped, one by one, to the floor; at the same time, a tiny streak of light held her. It came from the keyhole. Dropping to her knees, she looked through the small aperture. At first she saw nothing; then—yes—a hand moving on a shiny knob. She breathed quickly. That hand!

It was distinct, unmistakably revealed to her. And it was not Mr.

Goldberg's hand; he had not returned to the room, then. Nor was it Chatfield Bruce's; the knowledge came to her with startling force. She had been so certain of the identity of the intruder, had almost welcomed her own perspicacity which had led her thus to place him. And now to learn—was she disappointed at this perversion of what she had expected? She continued to look; Bruce's long, shapely fingers were most unlike these well kept, but short ones that swung now, apparently, a safe door open, and an instant later held something white dangling from them. She tried to find her voice, and was surprised that she could not at first. She endeavored to rise, but her knees seemed unaccountably weak. She was not exactly frightened; what, then? The hand passed from her gaze; she found herself, thereupon, suddenly able to call out in a voice unlike her own, faintly, louder! Whoever the intruder was, she heard him flee; where he went she could not tell.

Another, however, not in the house, but in the garden below near the wooded park, witnessed the sequence. Chatfield Bruce, with odd wonder and quizzical interest, saw the intruder take his departure. It was like an unexpected scene in a play; he, Bruce, spectator or critic, but gazed on. The man's form passed like a shadow down one of the great stone pillars; at the moment he touched the ground the spacious front room became flooded with light. A sound of distant voices, perturbed, excited, was wafted toward Bruce and his companion; between long French curtains a woman's hair waved and flashed like the yellow wheat tops blown by the wind. Bright colors came and went, vague gleamings of dressing gowns and garments hastily assumed.

"The pearls!" Bruce whispered. There was irony in his eyes; his voice thrilled. "Some unscrupulous person has inconsiderately learned of the secret hiding place, the combination of the strong box—"

The Oriental's face, uplifted to him as he spoke, expressed blankness; the

characteristic drooping lip seemed to hang more loosely.

"You mean—" he stammered.

The young man did not answer. A lower door of the house had suddenly slammed. He could hear now plainly the expected words always called forth by the circumstances and saw him to whom they applied in the shadow of the dwelling, moving from bush to bush, at right angles from where they stood, toward the road where it swung down in the direction of the village. Close at hand someone, who had been hiding to watch Bruce and his companion, moved involuntarily forward a little into the starlight.

"Quick!" The young man's tones abruptly sharpened. "Back!" He thrust the Chinaman from him, one poignant thought assailing him. He—they—must needs beware lest they, too, become actors in the new strange drama.

The Oriental vanished with wondrous celerity; Bruce, himself, wheeled. About to spring toward the wooded park, he felt himself suddenly grasped; lithé, strangling arms wound around him. A hot breath swept his cheek; near his ear a shrill, panting voice, Cagliostro's, called out loudly: "This way! He is here!"

Bruce tried to shake himself free, but in vain. He found himself at a great disadvantage with this, his old enemy; he had walked, as it were, like a mouse into a trap. If he were taken now—What a grim conclusion! His right hand was of no assistance to him; the acute realization of being overpowered, that the end was not far, smote him, when, as a phantasmagoria of something that has been comes to a drowning man, he seemed transported back into a garden in ancient Kioto. He stood near the mattings of fine bamboo fiber not far from the tinkling fountain and saw, in a dream, the mountains, the sacred edifices, a setting for the strange little man, no bigger than a boy, their jiu-jitsu instructor.

Slap! Slap! He heard the forms fall with muscles relaxed, and strike the matting. Then he observed the little

master tie one arm to his side, and one of the pupils essay to overthrow him. With what result? That the latter suddenly found himself as one who steps from the sunlight into the inner sanctuary of the lacquered Buddha and becomes lost in darkness; for the moment had the flow of his life been stopped. By only one of many devices; but what a trick! The fingers of Bruce's free hand reached out, supple, terrible.

Caglioni did not, at first, seem to understand or divine that expedient; he had probably never heard of it. But seeking once more to call out, he experienced a sensation of sudden surprise; spots began to dance before his dimming gaze, objects to whirl around. He strove to whip the long, pressing fingers from the artery they held closed. As well endeavor to shake off the clutch of a panther! It happened with incomprehensible swiftness; his heart seemed to stop beating; he became strangely inert. Consciousness was leaving him, when he was flung off afar, like an unclean thing. He did not move now, but lay still, huddled up in a clump of black bushes.

Bruce swayed for a moment. The warning cries of the secretary had been heard; voices were approaching, people coming toward him fast from the house. His whole body racked with agonizing throbs; yet he had no time to pause. He hardly knew what he did, but leaped into the path below. They saw him and came after. As in a dream, he realized that the chase was on.

IX

BRUCE had no idea where he was going; dazed by the shaping of events, he fled without thought of direction. As if the night's adventures had not already been sufficiently thrilling without this mad sequel! Unfortunately, the way, blindly chosen, favored him; the shadow of the hill threw its impress on the road the path zigzagged into; overhanging foliage blackened certain places. But his pursuers were near; he could hear the sound of their feet and the loud shouting. Truly, a merry

pursuit, a hot hue and cry! They were holding the course, taking to the scent like hungry hounds in the scramble of a haphazard steeplechase. He would have to play his part, for a time; he needs must when— His brain began to clear.

Bruce continued to run on; the shadows danced by him. But fast as he went, the pursuers kept him in sight; where the road, shorn of shade now, turned sharply, like a horseshoe, they from above could look down and see him. A few of those following, knowing certain short cuts, had taken them. At such times he could hear the crashing of branches, the breaking of dry limbs. They were nearer, dishearteningly so. The stake was great. A necklace of pearls, representing a fortune! A large reward would await him able to return it to the owner, and he who had it was apparently so close; they would not allow him to get away. Among them were a number of husky farmer lads, assistant gardeners at the Goldberg place, well prepared for a test of physical capability. One or two that had weapons used them, and although the leaden missives went wide, a new source of hazard ensued for Bruce.

Some distance ahead an old road, descending, ran into the one he was on. But as he neared the fork, a figure approaching fast on the old road toward the new became discernible afar. Someone bent on heading him off, of course, Bruce decided quickly. With muscles set, he prepared for an encounter he feared would be brief; he was not very sanguine of favorable results to himself. The man reached the highway a hundred yards or so ahead of Bruce; there the latter expected to see him turn and halt, and prepare to stop him. To his intense wonder, this person did nothing of the kind; he ran on ahead of Bruce, and at a surprising rate of speed. Moreover, his rapidly moving figure continued to keep well to the front. Fear seemed to lend the stranger wings; he apparently had not the remotest desire to meet and try conclusions with Bruce nor the others.

An expedient occurred to Bruce; to attempt to wait somewhere at a turn of the road in the shadow, to merge, as best he might, with the others, explain if need be, and join in the man hunt of this miscreant, who had been in Mr. Goldberg's anteroom at his strong box and taken—what?

Did a motive of pity or false compassion in the oversensitive young man's breast for the poor wretch, fleeing for liberty, move Bruce at the instant and cause him to hesitate to yield to that other natural and proper impulse—to half waive and then again weigh the matter, until it was too late to act?

With a sudden leap the fellow left the road. Springing over a fence into the great orchard of a large estate he had just reached, he dashed into the shadows. Had those coming behind perceived the unknown and obviously self-proven guilty one who had been fleeing ahead of Bruce? The latter did not believe so. He found himself more disturbingly face to face with his own predicament, and considered again only the immediate imminence of being taken himself. Unfortunately, it would be out of the question now to say that he whom they wished for, longed to capture, had gone there, and stupidly point to the trees. They would take him, Bruce, instead, and, if they did not find the pearls in one of his pockets, would conclude he had thrown them away. No, he had let a chance slip foolishly, thoughtlessly; it was gone beyond recall. And—the realization smote him sharply—people were beginning to come up the road from the village. His own glance swept toward the fence; he, too, sprang over.

Mr. Page's place! He realized where he was almost at once. Running beneath the trees, he made his way toward the dim outline of the run-down, untenanted structure. He was cognizant of treading the young apples beneath his heel, of suddenly slipping and catching himself, then striking hard, as he lurched forward, a low branch he had not seen. At the shock he seemed suddenly to become dizzy;

a throb of pain gripped his side. He could hardly stand; with an effort he steadied himself against a tree trunk. But he realized he could not long remain thus; an instant, and he went on. To pause meant that the others would soon come up to him; luckily, they were now running by.

A bend in the way had for the instant concealed him from them when he had vaulted the palings of the Page estate. They would before long, however, understand where he had gone; when they reached the nearby straight prospect of highway and failed to see him, they would at once return. At best, a brief interval only would be gained; he must make the most of it.

He staggered toward the house. A dark form had preceded him, but he did not see it now; he was mindful only of himself.

He moved to the half-rotting door of the kitchen; the big, dilapidated old mansion frankly made no pretense of keeping out anyone seriously bent on entering. He pushed at the back door; it yielded. The young man stood in the darkness; feeling a hard projection, he half sank upon it—a sink. Resting thus, he strove to suppress his panting, to regain his strength. The moments passed; the pain in his side grew less. He listened. No sound of the pursuers!

Could it be, by some lucky chance, that they had continued on their way? Hope throbbed in his breast. He would, however, remain in this black shelter only a short time longer; then he would be sufficiently himself to go on and meet what might come. He made a movement, then suddenly stood stock still.

Someone else was in the house—not far from him, standing or crouching in the darkness! He had caught the sound, and knew he could not be mistaken. Bruce hardly breathed as he stared into the night. A faint creaking as of a heavy body stirring, he could not tell where, now assailed his ear; he could fancy he caught a low, sibilant respiration. Some object struck lightly, unintermittently, the wall. A bit of burlap, loosened by the wind?

Tap, tap! Bruce's figure drew back to spring. Click! A finger was at the trigger of a revolver. Bruce did not leap forward; instead, he stepped swiftly aside, at the same time calling out.

X

"Do you want to bring the others here?" he said in a sharp tone. "They're apt to come back soon enough anyway. If you only wish to add to your predatory transgression by gratifying a homicidal impulse, wouldn't it be less stupid—pardon the word from a stranger—to accomplish it in a quieter and more delicate manner? For your own sake, of course," he ended softly.

Noiseless as a shadow, Bruce again moved; a possible leaden answer would not find him in the place whence he had spoken.

"Who are you?" The voice was hoarse; it vibrated harshly. In the bare room the echoes seemed to distort the sound. There could be divined, however, in the hollow, unfamiliar accents, an abject pusillanimity; he who had dared to enter the Goldberg house and rifle the safe had lost the cool pluck that must have nerved him to the risky and difficult *coup*.

Bruce whistled softly. His foot came in contact with a bit of wood on the floor; he stooped for it and answered: "Never mind!"

"But I do," came in shriller accents. "Quick, or—"

"Hush, fool, or they will be here! And put down your revolver, dol!" he said persuasively. "I'm not half so afraid of an armed adversary who is a man of mettle as," contemptuously, "a poltroon with a weapon."

Did the fellow lower his arm? The stillness ensuing lasted only a moment, but it seemed very long; the unknown, in an uncertain voice, repeated his first question.

"That is little to the point," replied Bruce. "I might indulge in a like curiosity, but do not. As far as I am concerned, let the darkness keep its secret. You may be a mere vulgar

chevalier d'industrie, professional house-breaker or cracksman. Or you might be a gentleman, subjected to temptation and fallen—one of Mr. Goldberg's guests!" he ended shrewdly.

Again came the ominous, preliminary click. Bruce lithely shifted once more. The hammer fell, but the cartridge only snapped.

"Lucky for you!" exclaimed the young man, and leaped forward. His own hand swung here, there! Then the billet of wood struck something hard; the revolver clattered to the floor. "Let it lie!" A suppressed sound answered; the fellow seemed to shrink back in a corner. "If you got your deserts, I'd leave you senseless beside it, with the pearls in your pocket for them to find—" He broke off, held his head toward the door and listened. He thought he heard stealthy footsteps without, but could not be sure. The silence now was that of the grave.

"Don't give me up! Don't!" The man cried out in a sudden agony of fear. "I was mad; I did not know what I was doing. It was the first time. Those cursed pearls, they bewitched me! For the love of heaven, tell me, is it real—no terrible dream?"

"I'm afraid it's real enough," observed Bruce drily. "You've got a bad attack of afraid-you're-going-to-be-found-out," he observed with light accents. "Cheer up! No doubt you'll take a rosier view of the situation in the morning. That is," he added, "if you act at once!"

"You mean," uncertainly, "you're going to let me go?"

"If you can get away—from them!" he supplemented.

"But why should you do that? Why are you here? Were you, too, running away from someone?"

Bruce moved toward the door. "I was standing near the Goldberg house; they took me for you. It would have been inconvenient for me to have stopped just then. A young lover dreaming beneath his *dulcinea's* window," mockingly, "might be averse to explaining his romantic presence to a hard and unsympathizing world."

Did the other, even in his terror, detect the derisiveness of those tones? His own voice came out of the night now in a sudden, sharp whisper. "I see! You, too, were after the pearls—pard!"

The last word seemed added after an instant's hesitation, as if the fellow made a belated attempt to veil his position, a possibly respectable standing in the community.

"Will you share?"—Bruce spoke swiftly—"since you honor me by calling me 'pard'?"

"I—I"—cupidity struggled with alarm in the man's voice—"didn't get them. They raised the alarm before I cribbed the swag!"

"That's unfortunate," Bruce said coolly. No lie was ever more apparent. Something else, too, had become apparent to Bruce: the fellow's voice—he had heard it before. Where? He could not remember at that moment.

"I didn't get the swag," reasserted the voice.

"Well, I'll take your word for it."

Bruce opened the door, which he had closed on entering. "Time to be off," he said curtly. His head throbbed, but he strove to hold himself with alertness, with every fiber on the *qui vive*.

"You mean together?" the other asked in obvious trepidation.

Bruce answered quickly in the negative; he had no more desire that night for the fellow's company than the latter had for his. They had met in the complete obscurity of darkness; they would part, each unknown to the other.

Bruce stepped yet further from the door to allow him to pass unidentified. "Colonel Manyan's house is the fourth or fifth. He lives there the year around," he added significantly. "After you!" He waited; he thought he had seen the fellow stoop to pick up his revolver.

The latter, however, hesitated to go first. "How do I know you won't—" "

"Bestow upon you a *coup de grâce* as you pass? You will have to take a chance at that—and at once!"

The man moved to the threshold,

but instead of stepping out, he bounded back with an exclamation of sharp terror. A number of persons, who had either just entered the grounds or been concealed in the bushes, now sprang fiercely, exultantly toward the house. The fellow wheeled and ran from the kitchen back through the dwelling toward the front. Apparently he knew the place well. Bruce stepped quickly behind the door—and none too soon!

Those in the yard, rushing forward with loud cries, now swept in and went stumbling on after the retreating footsteps. The young man listened to the pursuers' eager, more or less blundering movements; a few moments later he heard the front door slam. Bruce slipped out at the back; at the same time the fellow emerged from the front. All concern now focused on the latter; he had not yet been captured. Amid other sounds Bruce caught that of a loud voice, surely Bolger's, ringing out in stern command to the fugitive to throw up his hands and surrender. The fellow did not heed; fear seemed to lend him extraordinary agility and strength. He discharged his weapon freely, used wildly his fists and arms. A number of those who tried to stop him he evaded; he struck one or two down, leaping past them into the shadows. Bruce heard the din of hoarse exclamations; then the confused mass of people seemed moving further aside, away from the house.

Unperceived, he ran out. He saw no one, only heard them, the voices becoming more distant. A shadow of a smile crossed his lips. "Thanks, Monsieur Incognito," he murmured to himself. He dashed from the house and set out at a breakneck speed along the private road, up and across the broad meadow.

XI

MARJORIE WOOD awoke early; she had not slept well that night. It was still dark without when she slipped from her bed and looked at her watch. Not yet three o'clock, she saw by the tiny light left burning in her room;

it would be some time before the others in the house would be stirring. A moment she stood uncertainly near the mantel; then she moved to the window, and, drawing the curtains, looked out.

How still it was! Not a leaf seemed to move. She listened, watched; then her gaze became more intent; it fastened on a particular spot. From the black fringe of forest that reached like a triangle toward her room, she thought she discerned in the gloom something moving toward the shrubs on the lawn—an object, a figure? No; a shadow; now that was gone. Strive as she might, she could not again locate it.

She stepped to the chair, over the back of which hung her dressing gown, slipped two shapely young arms with their lacy covering into the garment, thrust her feet into her slippers and went to the door. Opening it quietly, she stepped into the hall.

The house was but dimly lighted; the old boards of the floor, though covered with heavy rugs, creaked slightly beneath her soft footfall. At the head of the stairway she paused; from the opposite end of the hall a brighter streak of light came from beneath the door of a room, Sir Archibald's! A slightly questioning look shone an instant from her eyes; then she went on; the Baronet had probably overlooked turning off the electric current before retiring. Slowly she descended to the library, now a sombreous place, with black lines of shade thrown this way and that across the floor.

The girl reached up and turned on one of the sidelights. The answering gleam, though not bright in that spacious apartment, served to banish some of the deeper blurs from nooks and corners. She put out her hand toward the bookshelves. Her fingers rested on a volume at random, "The Eve of St. Agnes," when, at that moment, her attention was abruptly arrested, held by a sound, distinct, unmistakable. Someone had approached very lightly across the gravel walk to the house, stepped onto the lower balcony and stood now without. She was certain of the fact; what she had thought she had

seen some time before had not been a shadow, then. The book fell from her hand; she stepped quickly behind one of the heavy long curtains. Shielded by its folds from being seen, her eyes tried to penetrate the darkness.

She saw nothing, however, except the glimmer of the night. Then, with senses alert, she caught once more the football and made out a figure, at first dark, uncertain, afterwards plainer. He stood on the veranda somewhat aside, looking toward one of the library windows. His figure was framed by the black timbers of the porch; they lent it an odd prominence. The shadowy form and the sky made a picture, a nocturne rimmed by straight Cimmerian lines. In the distance, faint quiverings lent depth to the background; fairy fingers seemed weaving intangible cobwebs of light across the somber sky. Something vaguely white added a dim, intrusive note to the impression; the girl started.

That bit of white was against his side, on his arm, or—around it! She discerned now what it was—a bandage! That was strange! Why—then the intruder was, must be—

In the surprise of the moment she suddenly stepped back, and in so doing parted the curtains. A glow of light from the room gleamed abruptly upon the porch and lay like a bright sword amid the darkness at the intruder's feet. Was he startled, moved, for his part, to some quick, involuntary action? The girl did not see; she was momentarily too dazed, bewildered. She held the curtains farther apart and looked out at him. And he, stepping at once forward, looked in at her, with the glass door between them. He was smiling now; he held himself lightly erect, though at what pain, what cost to himself, she might little know.

As in a dream, she swung open the long French windows. A moment still he lingered without, his gaze very bright on her; the crown of dark hair that seemed to catch up and hold the light behind her, the deep eyes—too deep, in the wondrous shadow, to be blue!

"You are—surprised?" he murmured. The words were spoken so faintly they seemed a part of the breeze that stirred about her now, waving slightly the folds of her gown and her hair. "I'm afraid I startled you."

"I—just a little." She saw now, with a new responsive thrill, how worn and drawn was his face.

His eyes, however, yet strove to mask an expression of pain, acute, almost overpowering.

"But why," she began, "why did you—" and stopped; she seemed suddenly to understand.

The burns! They had been severe; had she not herself seen? He, with all his fortitude, had been unable to sleep, to endure the confinement of his room; had felt impelled to go out, through physical pangs, anywhere, out into the night, anywhere to be moving!

"Ah!" she breathed impulsively. Her eyes were like stars; the lace at her throat stirred quickly. He came in.

"Why—why did you not call someone?" she faltered.

"Call someone?" he repeated, as if not understanding. His gaze burned; her lashes half lowered.

"The bandages—they are disarranged. Shall I not call someone now?"

"What—wake the household? It is unnecessary, quite." He spoke lightly, though very low, with a forced jauntiness in his accents. But even as he replied his figure swayed slightly; she noted the quick growing pallor of his face. He leaned hard with his hand on the table, sought yet to stand erect, then seemed to sink, through no volition of his own, to a large chair. A faint cry was stilled on her lips; she looked at him, then glanced quickly around her, when, as if divining some intention on her part, he again moved and made a gesture with his hand: "Call no one," he repeated. "It is nothing. I'm a bit done up; that is all. I'm quite myself now," he added with an effort.

"But—you are not," she said.

"Hark!" He seemed listening. "I hope we haven't awakened anyone."

"It wouldn't matter. Let me—"

She bent over, and before he had time to expostulate began to rearrange the bandages of his hand. He felt too absurdly weak at the moment to resist.

"It is really all right now," he murmured, an accent of self-scoffing in his low voice at this enervation, the unheroic part it forced upon him.

"Wait!" She would not be put aside; she had not quite finished.

"You are too good," he breathed.

The stillness continued—a few seconds, then was suddenly broken by the unmistakable sound of something above, a door opening softly. His hand involuntarily lifted; his figure straightened. The girl, too, heard and rose. The task she had set herself, however, was done; she looked hurriedly toward the stairs, then back at him. But he seemed not to see her now; his fingers rested on something in an inside pocket at his breast, something hard, slightly projecting. The girl did not notice his gesture. Over her face a flush had slowly spread; her eyes, which had swept first upward and then swiftly aside at Bruce, lowered at a sudden realization of her appearance. A word or two further, and she moved across the threshold, up the stairway, with cheeks still brightly tinted but head proudly erect, gained her own door and went in. Bruce heard it close gently.

A few moments he continued to stand motionless, as if listening, then moved to a table upon which rested a decanter near a box of cigars. Pouring out a glass of wine, he drank it quickly. Through the partly opened door leading out onto the lower balcony, the earliest tint of dawn could be seen on the eastern horizon. A bird's note, afar in the forest, smote the sky. He looked out; the lawn was deserted. No one had followed him; none of those he had met below had seen him enter here. For the instant, that last impression of the unknown he had encountered so strangely in the Page house recurred to Bruce, the din occasioned by this person's mad, des-

perate dash. Had the fellow escaped with his booty? If he had been taken? A certain new contingency insinuated itself in Bruce's brain. The morning—what tidings would it bring?

Bruce listened again for sounds from above, but heard nothing; the big, rambling house was wrapped in silence—an ominous, deceptive stillness. Then he walked out into the hall and ascended the broad stairs. At the top he paused to look around him, then moved noiselessly toward the corridor leading to his own room.

To reach it he was obliged to pass Sir Archibald's apartments. He seemed to hold himself with figure very alert, as if awaiting, expecting something sudden to happen—a door to open—the Englishman or his secretary or both to appear abruptly on the threshold, then and there to hurl themselves upon him, to end at once a silent contest, a strenuous, secret strife! But nothing of the kind occurred; the chambers of the Baronet continued as hushed as the grave. A slightly puzzled expression crossed Bruce's features as he paused at his own threshold. Sir Archibald was not one to hesitate, once sure of his ground. Could it be that now—Cagliani! A sudden light broke upon the young man; the secretary might not yet have returned to the Wood mansion. Was the theory tenable? Had the Portuguese been more injured than Bruce had expected? Had aught else happened to detain him? What would the next few hours show?

The gods seemed to have granted him a respite. But for how long? A moment's exultation was succeeded by clearer afterthoughts. His fingers rested on a single key in one of his pockets; mechanically he drew it forth. Unlocking the door, he stepped in. The light was still burning as he had left it; the dressing gown was where he had thrown it. Nothing seemed disturbed; no one had been there.

He turned the key in his door again, then felt once more in his pocket for the key to the other door, the one opening on the upper balcony.

He could not find it. He hastily turned everything out of his pockets onto a table—a match box, a small knife, a cigarette-case, his watch, money, but not that for which he sought. It was gone. Again shadows seemed surrounding him, deeper, darker than before. He shook his shoulders, as if to shake a gathering of ominous forces from him.

A key? It was a little thing, derisively he told himself, hardly to be seen, let alone noticed, even if anyone should chance upon finding it somewhere without, which was most unlikely.

Bruce began to undress. His clothes were decidedly the worse for wear; fortunately, Mr. Wood had instructed the chauffeur to bring up from the inn his guest's handbag. It would be there soon; the young man awaited its coming with interest.

XII

"*CAFÉ au lait* for two," said Sir Archibald tersely to his valet early that morning.

"Very good, Sir Archibald." And the man, a thin, deferential-appearing fellow, who had been in the Baronet's service many years, bowed himself out of the room. Sometimes his master and the secretary breakfasted American fashion, *en famille*, as it were, in the bright apartment downstairs; on other occasions, when they expected to put in a busy morning with correspondence or papers for certain learned societies, they sipped their coffee and ate their rolls and eggs Continentalwise in Sir Archibald's cozy sitting room. In this last contingency, however, the Baronet usually lounged, clad in a sober Scotch dressing gown, pipe in hand, near his table. Now the valet noted that his master was engaged in putting the finishing touches to his toilet; he adjusted with strong, precise fingers his necktie and set squarely in the middle a small horseshoe of rubies and diamonds.

As the door closed and the valet disappeared, Sir Archibald permitted,

privately, an expression of considerable feeling to sweep his usually stolid countenance. He walked once or twice back and forth across the thick carpet, hands in pockets, his tread aggressive, heavy. At that moment, his eyes, full, old-looking for a man not yet much past thirty, expressed indubitable signs of annoyance, if not anger, which faded as a discreet knock announced the valet's return. The latter set down a tray quietly, removed the Chinese checkerboard and laid the table, noiselessly arranged the dishes and, after a last low customary inquiry if there was anything further, effected once more his unobtrusive exit.

Sir Archibald, although he had ordered coffee for two, drank it alone; he appeared not at all concerned about his secretary's share of the beverage getting cold. He even helped himself from both cups, and ate one of the eggs designed for Caglioni. Having partaken, he rose, looked at his watch and then at the closed door leading into his secretary's room. As he did so his brow darkened, and he stepped out upon his veranda. The French windows opening from Bruce's room were fastened, and Bamford's glance, swerving, passed to the fringe of forest, where it lingered. A big muscular fist closed; he brought it down softly upon his own palm. Caglioni's continued absence tied his employer's hands.

What had happened during the night? He stood impotent, in the dark. The game was yet a waiting one, but there was such a thing as waiting too long. He had done so once or twice on his *macham* in an Indian jungle, and the panther had not only gotten away, but taken the bait with him. Sir Archibald stirred restlessly. He was a very patient man, but had not his patience already been sorely tried when he had heard whispered voices in the library some time before and had wished to play, not a listening, but an acting part?

Returning to his room, he completed his toilet, which done, he stood ready for the events of the day, whatever they might be; he had a premoni-

tion that the hours to come would be exciting ones.

Passing out into the hall, he paused long enough to tell one of the housemaids that Senhor Caglioni, after breakfasting, had retired to his own room. The secretary was not feeling well—a bad headache, so any of the servants whose duty it was to care for his room could defer that task until later in the day. Then he walked quickly down the stairs. As he was stepping by the library he stopped an instant to glance through the open door, but no one was there. He walked on out of the front door and into the garden.

There his glance sought again the wing of the rambling mansion; he even moved to one side to get a better view of it, the trelliswork, the ground beneath. Engaged in the consideration of a decidedly limited and profitless mathematical process, beginning at certain footprints on the ground and ending at a closed room overhead, he did not at first hear a motor car approaching the house along the highway in front. It had turned into the grounds ere he raised his head to look around; the machine swept quickly down the private way through the lawn and suddenly stopped.

The chauffeur leaned at first from his car, as if to answer someone who had spoken to him, then, shutting off the noise of the machine, respectfully got out. At the same moment Sir Archibald walked forward. He saw now who the "someone" was—a girl in a rose-colored linen gown. The Englishman's lips set rather firmly in an abrupt, hard line; but only for an instant. He became once more heavily debonair as a Piccadilly masculine fashion print and greeted Miss Marjorie with conventional blandness. She, however, appeared more interested in a certain bit of information she had just received than in him.

"Oh, Sir Archibald," she exclaimed, "James, here, tells me the wonderful Goldberg pearls have been stolen! A thief or thieves entered the house last night!"

Bamford started, and looked at the

girl. In her hand were scissors with which to cut flowers; she wore no hat. "Stolen!" he repeated crisply, his glance shifting quickly to the chauffeur. "Explain yourself, my man."

"That's all there is to explain, Sir Archibald." The answer came a little stiffly. An American chauffeur is not a British flunky, and the sharp and autocratic "my man" jarred, perhaps, on the national spirit. "Everyone down in the village tells a different story, but the gist of it is, the pearls are gone."

"And you didn't learn anything more definite than that?" Bamford asked impatiently.

"Not even when they were taken, James, and—if they had any clue to the miscreants?" added the young lady.

"I didn't stop to learn further details, Miss Wood," returned the man, "as I had to come back at once with this." He nodded toward a suitcase in the car. "There was a detective from New York at the inn, a Mr. Bulger or Bolger. They had evidently sent for him. But he wasn't saying anything."

Sir Archibald swished rather hard with his heavy stick at the foliage; obviously the chauffeur's incomplete account annoyed him.

"Oh, I did hear someone say the burglar might have been a gentleman—one of the guests," observed the driver of the car suddenly.

"What an impossible conclusion!" exclaimed the girl.

Bamford looked at her more sharply. There were shadows beneath her eyes—eloquent of what? Sleeplessness? The proud face might have seemed paler than its wont, save for the rose-colored gown, which imparted to it a subtle reflection of its warmth. She had cut but one or two flowers, which she wore; they, too, were of a red tone. He flattered himself he was a profound student of womankind; any particular feeling he might entertain for one of them could not cast a glamour over his perspicacity. Love might be a garden of delight, but the rational being, especially an Englishman, treads it with his

eyes open. Sir Archibald's now were lazily alert, sleepy, almost reminding one of a big cat's. They disconcerted Marjorie Wood at that moment for some inexplicable reason, as if they were plunging deep, deep into hers, to wrest something from her.

"I hardly agree with you," she heard him say with a slight smile, as if conscious of his own power—"about its being impossible, don't you know? For my part," he added, "I find it, at least, conceivable."

"Do you?" Her face was a little colder. The chauffeur returned to his car and waited. The voice of another approaching broke in upon them; it was the gardener, who had been working in one of the beds near at hand. "I beg your pardon, Miss Wood," he said with broad accent, "but I could nae help overhearing what you were saying about the burglars at the Goldberg house, and," he added, pressing his thin lips tight, "it's my opinion those same gentry were around here last night."

"I don't understand." The girl looked at him quickly, a little startled.

"Will you be so gude as to follow me, miss?"

She did so, as did also Sir Archibald; the chauffeur, glancing over his shoulder as if he, too, were interested, controlled, however, his curiosity and guided his car slowly toward the house.

"Look at this, and at that!" The gardener pointed indignantly to one or two broken flower stems, footprints on the edge of the soft, earthy beds. "I raked over here yesterday just before sundown, and those must ha' been made during the night. Who did it?"

"H-mm!" Sir Archibald made a slight sound and eyed the girl sidewise. A delicate crimson came slowly to her face. "How ridiculous!" broke from her. "Your burglar theory, I mean."

"Perhaps, miss, perhaps," said the man, but his countenance showed he retained his own opinion.

"Let us see!" Sir Archibald bent down to look. "A shapely, aristocratic foot," he laughed. "Too shapely for your vulgar housebreaker's!

"Unless," he added—but he did not utter that which he had been on the point of saying. Instead, he indulged once more in that enigmatic murmur, "H-mm!"

"It's making a great deal out of nothing," exclaimed the girl impetuously. "The explanation is, no doubt, very simple."

"Yes?" Sir Archibald observed quietly, looking up at her.

She bit her lip and held herself more erect. She was about to speak, when the other abruptly straightened.

"Your father," he observed, looking toward the house. Mr. Wood, on the front steps, was speaking to the chauffeur.

She turned quickly, and murmuring something in a low tone, moved away. Sir Archibald followed with slow footsteps. Mr. Wood had heard the story by the time they drew near, and proposed that they set out immediately for the Goldberg mansion. The chauffeur removed the suitcase from the car. The Englishman's eyes rested on it absently. Suddenly his manner became decisive, and signifying his intention of being ready in a moment, he turned and entered the house.

Chatfield Bruce, from one of his windows in the second story of the wing, had seen the car turn into the grounds of the Wood estate, and now he observed it go out once more and noted the occupants. As the sound of the motor receded down the road, he rang the bell sharply. Simpson answered.

"My suitcase, that was brought from the inn—send it up."

"Very well, sir. I'll see to it myself, sir."

But time passed; the young man rang again impatiently.

When at length Simpson did return, his countenance was troubled, his manner gravely apologetic. He regretted the circumstance; some mistake must have been made, for the suitcase could not at the moment be found. Presumably it had been forgotten and left in the motor.

"Nonsense!" said Bruce, regarding

him keenly. "You are positive you have made a thorough search? Then you may go."

As the man started to open the door, Bruce, through the crack, became suddenly aware of a lurking figure, which moved quickly away. Sir Archibald's valet! Had he, too, been pressed into new service, that of watching, spying upon him?

Bruce laughed. "Don't bother any more about the suitcase. It'll only be a waste of time. I hardly think you'll find it until the car returns." And as Simpson again moved away, the latest guest laughed once more.

Sir Archibald was showing himself rather fine and subtle. Possibly, even, the big Englishman understood a joke, and was smiling to himself now as he sped down the road. But for Bruce, it was no smiling matter; he remained here a prisoner at the moment when he wished most for his freedom. He looked again out of his window. At a corner of the veranda, a shadow, which might have been a man's, moved slightly athwart the boards. Below, the flowers nodded at him, but he remained oblivious to the dancing colors. A hearty breakfast had given him new strength; excitement deadened the pain of his hurt; his pulses throbbed protestingly for action. But what should he do? What could he do?

His restless glance, roaming aimlessly, fell upon the discarded evening clothes. An expression, oddly whimsical, played about his lips. "*When between Scylla and Charybdis*"—his eyes shone with abrupt decision—"one must steer a course somewhat precipitous." To conclude, with Chatfield Bruce, was to act; he did so quickly.

XIII

MR. WOOD and his party set out in their car prepared to arrive at a place of repining; they reached, instead, the gay terrace of a palace of rejoicing. Mr. Goldberg, one of the most animated among those sauntering and talking

THE SMART SET

there, radiated satisfaction; his wife's countenance shone with a kindred emotion; his daughter's aspect was the antithesis to that of a drooping Niobe. Miss Marjorie Wood and Sir Archibald surveyed them in surprise.

Mr. Wood was not so observant. "We called," he remarked in his fine, stately manner, as the car drew up near the front portico, "to tender our condolences, and incidentally, our services. As one of the oldest residents at Conscot, allow me to observe that the neighborhood has heretofore enjoyed an unimpeachable reputation."

"That's all right," said Mr. Goldberg, waving his hand lightly. "We don't mind a little episode like that of last night," he said with airy jocularity. "Pearls—poof!"

Mr. Wood stared in mild amazement. Sir Archibald inserted a monocle. Miss Goldberg, unable to contain herself longer, burst forth with the glorious news. "Do not mind him," she said indulgently. "The pearls have been found."

"Eh? What? I mean, congratulations," murmured Mr. Wood.

"By Jove! Oh, I say!" The single glass fell from the Baronet's eye. His surprise seemed even greater than that of the others.

"Yes; Mr. Bolger found them." The speaker was Miss Flossie; she directed her words to Bamford rather than to the others.

Sir Archibald did not answer. A slight contraction manifested itself on his brow. Of course, there could be no mistake; the faces around him were more eloquent than words, and proclaimed the tidings with irrefutable certainty. And yet—here again was chance interfering with his checkerboard, mustering the pieces with new, fantastic groupings. The pearls found!

"Don't you believe those women folks!" interrupted Mr. Goldberg in colossal high spirits. "It's only one of their little hallucinations!"

Whereupon, the feminine contingent referred to laughed. The host of Conscot mansion might be in as facetious

a mood as he wished at that moment; they humored him gladly.

"Will you kindly unravel this tangle, Miss Burke?" said Sir Archibald slowly.

Miss Flossie looked at him, then at Marjorie Wood. "I will try to," she answered. "But first, tell me," with light irrelevancy, somewhat forced, "how is your gallant rescuer this morning, Miss Wood?"

"I—we did not see Mr. Bruce before leaving the house," replied the other with a touch of constraint. "It was best not to disturb him, you see."

"No doubt he passed a restless enough night," put in Sir Archibald, with a casual glance at Marjorie Wood's profile.

"Yes?" Miss Flossie's green eyes seemed to gauge the speaker more than casually; the Englishman's face, however, was masklike.

"As you did here," he observed, studying her in turn—"unless I am mistaken. But the story—and from the beginning, if you please. Consider our impatience, Miss Burke."

She told of the night's happenings with reservations. Occasionally he interjected a question in a seemingly careless tone; but his queries were pertinent, once or twice in the least disconcerting. He set little traps in cross-examination for her; she evaded them with feminine adroitness.

No, she had not seen the intruder's face. Well, any part of him—his back, his feet, his hands? The keyhole, Sir Archibald buoyantly suggested, had been there; was she above the weakness of certain of her sex?

Yet even as, without actually disclaiming, she lightly waved the suggestion aside, he could not but note how she forbore to answer directly. Nor could he, unless inexcusably insistent, force an issue; deftly she eluded him, as a winged creature the too eager entomologist. And at the same time he felt the green surface lights of her gay glance prying into his eyes; she was a very deep young woman, he mentally concluded. But what motive could be hers in holding back, for only the moment perhaps, anything, however small?

In what way did the thread of her personality interweave itself in this already complicated tissue of events?

He reverted from the question of the identity of the intruder to the surprising sequence, the climax which had first greeted them on the bright lawn today. Personally, he had felt like one who reads the act of a play backward. The scenes leading to the culmination were very simple; Miss Flossie narrated them with graphic ease.

After the miscreant had fled from the Page house—fancy his having found refuge in her uncle's place!—he got into the grounds next door. There Mr. Bolger caught up to him, but the fellow again fought desperately and got away. But in the tussle he dropped the pearls; anyhow, the detective afterward found them and brought them with him to Mr. Goldberg, who—Miss Flossie's light head nodded toward that last named gentleman—at this moment had them once more safe in his possession.

Sir Archibald pondered; where was the weakness in the story? There seemed none.

"But could not Mr. Bolger or any of the others tell what the fellow looked like?" he asked finally. "Was he heavy or slight, short or tall?"

"In the darkness it was not easy to discern very much," answered Miss Flossie. "It is generally conceded, however, that he wore an evening suit."

"Then he was one of the guests!" murmured Sir Archibald, his glance still resting on Marjorie Wood.

"Easy enough for anyone to get a dress suit," interjected Mr. Goldberg. "Plenty of places that rent them. I don't attach any importance to the fact that he had evening togs on. He knew he had to hide or lurk around the house somewhere before making his attempt; if he came properly dressed and the servants happened to run across him, they wouldn't think so much of it on account of his clothes. People sometimes," he added jocosely, "are apt to be a bit erratic after a champagne supper."

But Bamford, it could be seen, main-

tained his own opinion, though he remained silent, contenting himself with a shrug of his big shoulders. There were, Mr. Goldberg cheerfully went on, other peculiar features to the case, for instance, the mysterious voice calling out to direct the pursuers just after the fellow had fled the house and was speeding toward the road. What had become of the unknown assistant? Who was he, and why had he so completely vanished? Why also had one of the Chinese servants? The Baronet's face had become graver as he listened. His secretary! Sir Archibald was thinking of Cagliostro, of a more tortile element, savoring of the Orient, subtly introduced into the case.

While talking, they had been walking toward that point where the sparsely wooded park began. As in a dream, Marjorie Wood again looked down into the valley. How different from the night before, when she had stood there with Chatfield Bruce! Now the landscape lay bathed in a glorious, golden light.

She did not seek to analyze her thoughts, but continued to look out down the hillside, marked here and there by a road like a silver ribbon half crumpled, unfolding haphazard fashion to the village. Suddenly something at her feet in the grass caught her glance, something bright and gleaming, which might have been passed unseen many times by many others, unless they chanced to stand at the exact angle to receive the glimmer of the sunshine reflected from it.

Marjorie Wood stooped and picked the object up, regarding it first in surprise, then with growing amazement. Her lips parted in a low, quick exclamation. She could not believe; and yet her gaze rested again on it in the palm of her hand—an object she knew and recognized.

"Are you so absorbed in the view?"

"Have you discovered some clue to the mystery?"

Voices broke in upon her, Sir Archibald's and Flossie's. Her hand closed hard; the sharp edges of something metallic hurt her fingers as she held

them to her side, but she managed to laugh.

"Yes and no. Who wouldn't be lost in admiration of the view?"

Sir Archibald's gaze clouded. Her words recalled on a sudden the night before—a shadowy form at the girl's side, a man's figure, tall and straight, his face eager, sedulous. Miss Flossie's keen eye seemed to have seen more than he had. It followed the white hand as it fell, and lingered to survey the folds of the fluttering gown which half concealed the girl's fingers and wrist. Miss Wood did not turn toward the two. At that moment her father approached with others, and she mingled quickly with them. Again Bamford heard her laugh gaily.

Miss Flossie's full red lips were curved in a smile. "What is your theory, Sir Archibald?" she said softly. "I have been told you have had experience for your government in solving many intricate and puzzling matters."

"Last night's affair was a very bungling job, was it not?" he drawled, looking into eyes that seemed to invite fuller inspection. "The person all New York has been talking about—who has Claude Duval, Dick Turpin, and all the other gentlemen, classic or modern, 'beaten to a finish'—couldn't have been concerned in it, could he now?" he murmured ingenuously. "And yet the pearls should have proved for him a proper bait, as the saying is."

"They were well enough advertised in the newspapers before the event," she flashed back. "The person you speak of must have known."

"And resisted the temptation to come here?"

"Naturally!" Her eyes narrowed. "Since the affair was so bunglingly handled, and the pearls were so easily recovered."

Sir Archibald looked at her more closely. "Possibly," he said, "it is you who have a theory?"

"I? Oh, dear, no," she answered hastily.

"Well, I will be frank and plead

guilty to entertaining a little one myself," he remarked lightly. "A theory, I mean." And bowing, he turned from her and walked away.

Mr. Goldberg, Mr. Wood and Mr. Bolger were at that moment discussing the affair in a little summer house over a bottle of Moselle and some strong Havanas. The detective spoke proudly; it was his privilege. True, the miscreant had slipped from his hands; but to him lay the credit of the fellow's not having gotten away with the spoils. It was more than half a victory, where the booty had been so considerable; it constituted a great triumph in the detective's own estimation of his accomplishment.

Sir Archibald, who had quietly drawn near, paused; his rather massive figure threw a shadow across the table. His heavy face seemed expressionless; he held a half-consumed cigarette in his large fingers as he listened phlegmatically. Mr. Bolger did most of the talking; his countenance was flushed; he exhaled big, generous whiffs of smoke.

"By the way, Mr. Goldberg," the Englishman interrupted in soft, lazy tones, "you have the pearls with you?"

"Right here," said Mr. Goldberg, tapping his breast. "Hereafter I eat, sleep and drink with them until they are safely tucked away in New York."

"Ah! May I look at them?"

The other at once took out a case, opened it and offered it with the contents to Sir Archibald. But the Baronet waved it away. "No, no," he laughed. "I said 'look.' You may hold them yourself, Mr. Goldberg; I call these gentlemen to witness that my fingers have not come in contact with them."

"I guess I can trust an English gentleman—especially when my own eyes are on him," observed Mr. Goldberg facetiously.

"But for my own sake." Sir Archibald puffed at his cigarette. "This case, which seems bound to become a *cause célèbre*, is already sufficiently involved."

"Seems very simple to me," interposed Bolger, with a touch of impor-

tance. The principal thing is, Mr. Goldberg's got his pearls back."

"Indeed!" Sir Archibald bent over the opened leather case held out for his inspection; a faint smile came to his lips. He looked closely at the gleaming white rope and sat down.

Mr. Goldberg's ever recurrent question jarred on a train of speculation. "Well, Sir Archibald, what do you think of them?"

"The pearls? Oh!" He started, then deftly flecked the ash from his cigarette. "You want a frank opinion?"

"Frank!" There was an accent of surprise in the host's voice. "Of course!"

"Did you ever," said Sir Archibald deliberately, "hear of Manchu pearls?" Mr. Goldberg stared, and Bamford went on. "A very clever people, who have learned to insert tiny matrices of brass or bone in the valves of the mollusk and then plant the shells in the streams behind their gardens and wait for results. Afterwards, by an ingenious process, the matrices are removed, the cavity filled with wax and neatly sealed. Pearls from Soo-choo"—with a laugh—"that are well calculated to deceive!"

"What do you mean? Get to the point!" Mr. Goldberg threw his courteous manner to the winds.

"I mean," said Sir Archibald calmly, "that these pearls you have just shown me were grown in such fashion as I have described. As for their value"—he snapped his finger—"I wouldn't give you a ten-pound note for them!"

Mr. Goldberg leaped to his feet; Bolger's eyes protruded. Sir Archibald alone sat apparently unmoved.

XIV

CHATFIELD BRUCE folded his dress suit neatly and wound the garments around with heavy sheets of light brown paper, which he tied into a compact parcel with stout twine. He had been somewhat particular about the quality of the paper, that it should be

strong enough; and the twine he had tested before using. The knots he had drawn very taut, but even then, surveying his handiwork, there appeared a dubious look in his eyes, which he seemed to endeavor to conceal from Simpson, standing respectfully near. Toward that individual he assumed a light manner, asking his views in the matter. Would the parcel do?

"Sorry to trouble you, Simpson," went on the young man. "But you know how it is, when you have only one evening suit to your name, and that's been damaged."

"In a good cause, sir."

Bruce raised his hand. "Don't!" he said, in a slightly altered tone.

Without, on the veranda a shadow stirred, the dark outline of the figure of a man, Sir Archibald's valet holding close to the side of the house, peering, listening!

"The address, sir?"

"Of course!" From where Bruce stood near the partly opened window the shadow of the eavesdropper on the veranda floor became visible; but if the young man was aware of it he gave no sign. It was not easy to discern from the crude, shapeless, dark outline that the source of the silhouette was a person. Bruce turned and grasped a pen, his manner again blithe and animated. "There! Do you make that out?"

"It's Chinese." The man outside caught the bewilderment in Simpson's tones and Bruce's seemingly gay answer.

"Well, we'll also put it in good American, lest the officials of the express company at Conscot and New York are only learned in that language and Irish. But didn't you ever hear, Simpson, that the Chinese are among the best tailors and costumers in the world? And when it comes to 'touching up' a suit, a bit the worse for wear, or accident, they possess a positive genius; they can even hide a patch!"

"Not necessary in this case, sir, I trust," returned the responsive and sympathetic Simpson.

Bruce handed the man the parcel,

but his fingers seemed yet to linger on it as he delivered a few last instructions. He was to forward the package by express to the address given.

Simpson went out; the young man heard the door close. The fellow on the veranda also heard the sound and glided swiftly away. Bruce stepped to the window and looked out. No one was there.

Meanwhile, Simpson prepared to issue forth on his journey to the town. As he stepped briskly out along the path which led to a certain little by-way he always took, his progress was abruptly arrested at sight of a figure crossing the lawn toward the house, at an angle which brought him nearer. It was Sir Archibald's secretary, and he looked haggard, more yellow, thoroughly "done up."

"I beg your pardon, sir," Simpson observed, "but Sir Archibald said you had decided to keep your room."

"Did he, indeed?" snapped the secretary.

"And that you were not very well," added the other wonderingly. This he could well believe. The man's eyes had an ugly gleam; his white teeth, showing between thin, drawn lips, seemed more pronounced than usual.

"Well, I decided *not* to keep to my room," remarked Caglioni shortly. "Speaking of which," he continued, with a smile which vainly sought to be amiable, "how is Mr. Bruce? He is in his room?"

"Oh, yes; and feeling rather better, I should say," returned Simpson cheerily. He was about to turn away when the secretary's look chanced on the bundle.

"You're bound for the village, now, I suppose," he said. "Something of importance, when you take it yourself." He nodded at the parcel.

"Not at all, sir," returned the man absently. "Just a little cleaning and fixing to be done."

"Oh!" observed Caglioni. "For Miss Wood, I presume?"

Simpson hesitated; perhaps, Mr. Bruce might not care to have it known that he, a type of masculine elegance

and immaculate neatness, was sending his dress suit to be repaired. Most young men, less fastidious, would have cast the offending garments aside and promptly ordered new clothes. Simpson unqualifiedly approved of Mr. Wood's latest guest, so he answered quietly, even with a certain dignity.

"I often take things down to the village for Miss Wood, sir."

As he passed on, Caglioni's glance suddenly changed; Simpson had shifted the bundle, and the secretary's eyes had caught sight of certain characters on it. Chinese? He was not quite sure; his brain seemed to move sluggishly; he felt surprised, uncertain what to do. He drew himself up. "A little cleaning and fixing!" One thought predominated; the need of further enlightenment from Sir Archibald; he, the secretary, had gotten out of touch with events. As he stood, hesitating, the sound of a motor down the road decided him; Sir Archibald was returning. Caglioni started toward the house.

The secretary met his employer near the front steps. Had Caglioni been less concerned at seeing Sir Archibald once more, he would have noticed that Mr. Wood's usually tranquil countenance was disturbed, that a pallor and a certain cold apathy marked his daughter's appearance. Bamford lingered, instead of repairing at once to the house, and Caglioni waited also. Mr. Wood, however, followed his daughter, who, descending quickly from the car, had entered the house.

"Well?" Sir Archibald and the secretary had now stepped aside. "Why did you not get back?" His tone veiled a quiet scorn. Caglioni knew his employer; all the latter cared for was results, not excuses, hence he cut short his story.

"So you let him get the best of you!" The Baronet gave a short, brutal laugh. "He—partly disabled!"

Caglioni's face assumed a more sickly hue. "Wait until I'm done with him!"

The continuation of Caglioni's narrative was commonplace enough. Recovering consciousness, he had crept back into the wooded park. Now that

Bruce was gone, the secretary dared not let his own presence be known; he realized he could not satisfactorily account for how he himself had happened to be there, when his proof of the other's presence and all that meant was wanting. So he had hidden and skulked, and was working his cautious way through the Wood forest, when he had lost himself in that dense tangle of underbrush and been obliged to wait until the dawn before he could escape from the cursed maze.

Sir Archibald listened. "Enough!" he said, and started to walk toward the house.

"Wait," said Cagliani excitedly. "You must tell me something—and quickly! I have a reason."

The other answered impatiently. There was only time now to act, he said.

"You mean—" A thrill of venomous joy shone from the secretary's eyes. "He has them here then? You are sure?"

"As sure as that he went to the Goldberg park last night to get them."

"Yes, I know that. And those worthless Manchu pearls Miss Goldberg wore, how do you account—"

"The pearls she had on just prior to our arrival at the house—very close to our coming," he put in ironically—"were her own, the celebrated Goldberg pearls. She thought she had them still, was in blissful ignorance of anything to the contrary, when you observed that they—"

"I understand," said the secretary with shining eyes.

"I even fancied I saw how it was done," murmured Sir Archibald. "The fellow, however, is so clever, I dared not be quite positive then; it might have been only a detail of a very elaborate scheme. When one of the supernumeraries is a Chinaman, the drama is apt to be more involved than appears on the surface. Mr. Wood and Miss Wood know that he who picked the strong box got poor pickings; they also know that the real pearls were taken earlier in the evening by someone else."

"Ah! And have they any inkling who the 'someone' may be?"

"Not the slightest—yet. It will be my unpleasant task to enlighten them."

Cagliani was observant now, as he had been the night before at the dance. "Mr. Wood and Miss Wood seem to have been rather taken with the fellow," he remarked.

Sir Archibald looked up to regard a small white cloud slowly dissolving. Perhaps the blue of the heavens today reminded Sir Archibald of skies far off in Italy, where he had first met Miss Marjorie Wood.

"After the little service he performed for Miss Wood," began the secretary, "they will naturally—"

"Of course, the matter will have to be handled delicately," returned Bamford softly, "delicately and respectfully—also firmly, as a diplomat would treat it, not," contemptuously, "a detective!"

Cagliani looked at his principal admiringly; he had learned to know Sir Archibald's ability in the diplomatic field; the big man could be almost caressing in his manner when driving the spike of his purpose through the hard plank of all opposition.

"Last night I was in the dark, not knowing about you," observed the Baronet. Now—"

"One moment!" cried the secretary, the glimmer of an idea flashing through his mind. "You have been away from the house; then you left him here alone, knowing he had the—"

"I did not *know* it then. But James has had his instructions to keep an eye on him and not let him once out of his sight—to follow him if necessary. And," smiling, "I had his suitcase removed—which I fancied would be enough to keep him and the pearls safely indoors until I got back."

Haltingly, as if uncertain of himself and his own suspicions, the secretary told of meeting Simpson with the bundle.

"I beg your pardon, Sir Archibald." It was the valet's voice interrupting. "I thought you ought to know at once. You told me not to let Mr. Bruce out

of my sight, and I didn't; but he has got Simpson to take a parcel of his old clothes that were damaged to the express office in the village, and—"

"But Simpson told me they were for Miss Wood," stammered Cagliani.

"I was outside his door on the veranda, sir, and heard him give Simpson the directions. And, sir, he was that particular about the twine and the paper and all the rest, for a lot of old clothes, that, thinks I, sir, here's an exceedingly fussy and pottering young gentleman—"

"You caught the address?" Bamford asked shortly, smoldering anger on his face.

"No, Sir Archibald—only that it was in Chinese, as well as—"

"Quick!" Sir Archibald, waving the valet sternly aside, out of earshot, wheeled on Cagliani. "Go to the express office. Get the address, or, better still, the parcel. If too late, follow it—around the world, if need be!" A suppressed exclamation, like an anathema, fell from his lips. "In this case we have to get the 'goods' to get the man," he said. "You understand? There is not enough evidence without."

Cagliani vanished; the Englishman again moved toward the house.

"Good morning, Sir Archibald!" A light voice greeted him from the head of the steps; Chatfield Bruce, neatly garbed in a business suit, looked down with a smile. "Beautiful day, isn't it?" he said in his friendliest manner.

Sir Archibald's countenance went purple. "I—you—" He had almost forgotten himself, blurted out some accusation, when something in the young man's eye held him. A spark, a flame, a mocking light of assurance, certainty, that beat back full-blooded, unreasoning passion, laughed at it as a senseless torrent, as Bruce himself was laughing now! "But perhaps you consider platitudes on the weather essentially superfluous!"

Bamford looked down as he passed into the house; he dared not trust himself to answer.

XV

WHEN Simpson returned with the receipt for the parcel and the news that Cagliani had appeared at the express office in the village, a slight but perceptible emotion might have been noticed on Chatfield Bruce's face. He paused near the flower plot, where he encountered Sir, son, and fixed upon that person a gaze obviously interested or concerned.

"So he said there was a mistake, and I wanted the parcel back?" queried Bruce, leaning on his light stick.

"Yes, sir, that you had changed your mind. I tried my best to get the parcel again for you, but it was too late." He spoke a little sourly; Simpson did not like vacillating temperaments.

But Bruce smiled indulgently on him. "I'm afraid Senhor Cagliani rather misunderstood," he observed.

"Then, you didn't want it back?" asked Simpson amazed.

"I'm very well satisfied as it is. Rather a mistake on the secretary's part, don't you know. Not worth mentioning, however. You say the parcel had already gone when he got there?"

Simpson answered that he had fortunately, or unfortunately, reached the express office just in time for the morning train. Bruce inwardly wondered if Cagliani had procured the address to which the parcel had been sent. No doubt. Then the secretary's next step would be—Bruce looked at his watch; he asked Simpson when the next train would leave for New York. There was one, the "accommodation," at half past eleven, half an hour after the train that had taken the express parcels. Rather late for that "accommodation," remarked the young man, with a laugh somewhat strained, regarding at the same time the hands of his watch indicating twenty-five minutes after eleven.

The eleven-thirty! Would Cagliani take it? Perhaps; in which event—But it was a very deliberate train, Simpson had said; it obligingly stopped at every station. What was the next train after the "accommodation"? At twelve o'clock, said Simpson; it arrived

in New York but a short time after the slower one; it was called the "flyer." As he was not sufficiently opulent to possess a real flyer, or "aero" of his own, Bruce answered jestingly, he would perforce content himself with this one, that he might not miss an important business engagement in town. He should have left earlier that day but for this little incident—touching his arm. He would explain to Mr. Wood, his kind host. The young man's tones were blithe, ingratiating.

Half an hour later found him seated in one of the ordinary cars of the "flyer." As the train yet paused for the engine to take on water, he reviewed Mr. Wood's last hospitable words, the pressing invitation to remain longer at his house. Miss Wood had not come down; she was in her room, changing her gown, Mr. Wood thought. She had, of course, not known that he was leaving so suddenly, or would, her father explained, have surely arranged to present herself in person, bid him *au revoir* and again thank him.

Did Mr. Bruce intend to return to Conscot? It was unlikely. Well, then, the elderly gentleman would see him somewhat later in town; his daughter had told him about the Japanese play to be given at their home for sweet charity. Good-bye until then.

"Then?" Into the young man's gay eyes had come a sudden light. He wondered if he and Miss Wood were destined ever to hold the Oriental mirror together up to nature.

A singular circumstance had been on his mind all the while he talked with Mr. Wood those last moments on the front steps. The key to the French door of Bruce's room, that he had felt sure he had lost, had been returned to the lock. What did it mean—that he had dropped it somewhere, in the house or on the lawn—that someone, presumably a maid, had picked it up and put it back where it belonged? Of course, that must be the solution.

On his way to the station he had passed Colonel Manyan's house, and had been stopped by that gentleman, all curiosity about the pearls. In the

morning light the Colonel had looked older and worn. The slight impediment in his speech again caught Bruce's attention; it brought with it sudden recognition—indubitable certitude! The man he had met in the dark in Pages's house. He had thought he knew the voice then, but had been unable to place it. Now, however—Bruce laughed in his questioner's face. Colonel Manyan, the thief who had robbed the safe! No doubt—no doubt!

What had seemed an inconsequential incident gave Bruce an understanding of how the Colonel had maneuvered in a desperate attempt to satisfy rapacious creditors. For, going down to the inn to dress, the evening before, Bruce had observed, coming from Colonel Manyan's house, the safe company's trusted workman, encountered at Mr. Goldberg's earlier in the day. The man had shown slightly then the effects of liquor; now, he was decidedly the worse for it. From this fellow and his appearance to the procuring of the combination of the safe on Colonel Manyan's part constituted, along general lines, no very difficult problem for Bruce to solve. The young man continued on his way to the station. Exit Colonel Manyan, the other's expression had seemed to say, exit, for all time, from the comedy!

But the play was going on; for him, Bruce, the action was quickening. He leaned back now in his seat in the car. A shrill whistle replaced the panting without; the train moved.

As it started, a man ran hurriedly across the platform and swung himself up onto one of the cars, but not before Bruce had caught a quick glimpse of his face. He experienced no surprise; from Cagliani's hasty visit to the express office and the secretary's presumably precipitate flight to New York on the train before this one, a very simple method of effect-to-cause reasoning had led Mr. Bruce directly, inevitably, to a single human agency—the innocent-looking James, Sir Archibald's valet. The baronet had more than one *mouchard*, or informer, at his beck and nod. "It would seem," mur-

THE SMART SET

mured Chatfield Bruce to himself, as the train gathered impetus, "from an extraneous point of view, a rather serious mistake has been made, that of having overlooked a pawn!"

But mistake or not, he had to go on with the game. "Check" had been said by Caglioni; other forces pressed for a "mate." That, however, had not yet come. Not yet, sang the wheels, not yet! His brain was exhilarated, his eyes brilliant with excitement. Conscot, with its little homes nestling so cozily on a green lap between verdant hills, faded from view; Mr. Wood's place was the last to be seen.

The train made but one or two stops on the way to the city. The first time it drew up, Bruce rose suddenly and left the car. He darted into the telegraph office and started to write a message. Someone followed and stood near, professing to be occupied with a like task. Bruce did not turn his head; but he knew well, of course, who he was. He shaded the yellow paper with his elbow and scribbled in fine, almost illegible characters.

The clerk who received it started to read the message aloud, while counting the words. The young man stopped him; how did the telegraph operator know it did not contain a hint or an important tip on the market? The man finished in silence, perusing the contents and estimating the charge; then, pointing downward with a reproving finger, "What is that word?" he asked severely of this rather too particular person.

At the question, he who had come into the office directly after Bruce bent his head more expectantly; but the young man did not answer audibly. Taking the telegram and grasping the pen once more, he, with a somewhat ironical look on his face, printed the letters there had been doubt about—the word "meet," after which he again returned the message to the operator, paid for it and started away.

The conductor's "All aboard" greeted him at the threshold. He closed the door of the telegraph office sharply, so sharply that he almost swung it hard

against the valet's face. But that person again managed to get the train by clutching the handrail of the last car; Bruce, however, felt fairly assured that the fellow had caught only part of the address and nothing in the telegram that would be of service to him. A smile came to the young man's face; he forgot the dangers and thought only of the zest of the new contest. It had opened fairly, and promised varied interest and piquancy of situation. He tried in fancy to look ahead; but mists seemed waving before his eyes. Of one fact he felt certain: the battle royal was swinging itself into a larger field of greater hazards. His expression changed; his gaze suddenly grew more intent.

Through the open door at the far end of the car he caught for a moment the whisk of a woman's skirts as she changed her seat in the Pullman coach ahead—a gown he knew and remembered, draping a form young yet full. After a brief, thoughtful interval, Mr. Bruce rose and looked into the parlor coach. Miss Flossie Burke was there, and conversing confidentially with none other than Mr. Bolger.

Bruce moved softly toward them and dropped into the section behind Miss Burke and Mr. Bolger. They sat with their heads close together; neither noticed the young man. Other people were passing to and fro; it was a particularly noisy bit of track they traversed at the moment; Mr. Bolger lifted his voice slightly. Miss Flossie seemed to have ingratiated herself somewhat quickly and cozily into the confidences of the man employed by her uncle; she permitted her green eyes rather free, bolder scope. In her hand was a little russet bag, with silver gilt trimmings; her gloved fingers fondled it.

Had the detective been an expert at dropping a sounding line into the almost fathomless depths of woman-kind, he would have caught beneath the playful surface lights of her gaze indications that Miss Flossie was not entirely in the coquettish or charmingly idle mood her manner seemed to imply.

"Yes," he said; "it is my opinion

they are in New York, that they were taken there by the Chinese servant who disappeared."

She regarded the speaker tentatively. "Suppose"—the girl's tone had become abruptly, irresistibly hard—"that paper, left in my uncle's box when the bonds were taken, should again turn up? And suppose it really contained some distinguishing mark pointing directly to one person, only one? Supposing all this, I say, could you convict that person on this paper?" She bent involuntarily a little closer to Mr. Bolger.

That gentleman seemed to shrink back. He remembered a certain conversation he had once had with Mr. Samuel Page in the latter's office. The elderly financier had spoken of having lost the scrap of paper referred to by his niece. The detective had concluded that Mr. Page had mislaid it. But now—Mr. Bolger continued to study Miss Flossie; his gaze more critical, steadier, full of a growing knowledge of her, of all her words implied.

"Of course," she laughed rather nervously, "this is all 'supposing.' I have 'supposed' a thousand such theories, most of them just as wild, no doubt."

He slowly opened his lips. What he had intended saying, however, was not uttered; the train had come gradually to a stop. People looked out over a houseless landscape. A little accident ahead of them, said the porter, passing at that moment down the aisle; Number eight, the Wells-Fargo express, had met with a slight mishap to a car coupling, a defective spring or something of the kind. They would have to wait here a few moments; the eleven-thirty "accommodation" was also held up, further down the line. Bolger rose with an expression of annoyance. Bruce held the newspaper before his face, but neither the detective nor Miss Burke looked back at him. Both moved toward the front and stepped out upon the platform to peer ahead; all the other occupants except Bruce sooner or later followed their example.

"You didn't hear any details at the

last station," Bruce asked the conductor—"whether any damage was done to the passengers—or the car carrying the express parcels? By the way, what would become of the latter, in case the train should have been somewhat badly wrecked?"

"Oh, I suppose they'd be transferred to the 'accommodation.'"

The 'accommodation'—that Cagliani had taken! Was it very close to the train that was delaying them? It might be, came the reply.

Bruce forgot about Miss Burke now. In his mind's eye he could see only one figure, a little brown man, very useful, very helpful, anxious to be of any assistance to the express employees, moving about vivaciously among the parcels and packages, prying, peering, peeping in the confusion, securing possibly one of the packages! Bruce leaned back and half closed his eyes.

How long they had remained here stationary already! He took out his watch. Only five or six minutes, at best? He could hardly believe the interval had been so short.

People soon began to scramble back to the train. All clear now to town—the statement circulated from lip to lip. Half an hour, and they would be at the station in New York. Again the wheels began to rattle and hum. In half an hour! And after that?

XVI

As the train drew up at the end of its journey, Bruce got out quickly and started toward the gate. The "accommodation" had, but a few minutes before, pulled in on the next platform, said the man carrying his grip. And the Wells-Fargo, before that? It, too, had arrived; the accident wasn't worth speaking of, the man had heard—something trifling gone wrong with the engine. Outside the gate, a throng of people awaited the passengers, and, close to the narrow opening, Bruce held back to allow Miss Flossie and Bolger, who were some distance ahead of him, to disappear from sight.

THE SMART SET

James, the valet, a good deal in the dark, watched the young man at a respectful distance and wondered; he saw him, however, after a few moments, again press on through the gate and walk rapidly toward one of the main entrances. But he did not reach it without a trifling mishap; someone, neatly attired, hurrying for a train, ran into him. The young man's hat was knocked off; he halted with an exclamation of annoyance to recover it. The stranger, however, at once stopped, stooped and, with an expression of regret, tendered it politely to Chatfield Bruce, then hurried on toward the information office.

Stepping into the street, Bruce hastened past a carriage stand; no, he would not take a cab. Cagliani, not thinking anyone was following him on the "flyer," would probably content himself with that less speedy and expensive equipage, in which event, he, Bruce, in a "taxi," might reach a much desired point as soon as Sir Archibald's secretary. The express parcels, no doubt, were on their way there by this time, from the express car to the express van, thence to the express office.

He had marked his little bundle, sent through Simpson, "To be called for." Who would call for it? Cagliani knew the address on it and could describe it. The secretary was not one lightly to be doubted; he wore good clothes and looked prosperous, for a foreigner. Bruce felt almost positive the ordinary express clerk would deliver him the parcel, or if he refused, could at least be impressed with the importance of not giving it up to anyone until after further investigation.

Bruce sprang into a "taxi," gave his directions in a low voice, and they started off. As they passed with some difficulty through the congested traffic the young man looked out through the little opening at the back; not far behind, James was just getting into a like vehicle, appearing as if he rather enjoyed an experience out of the line of his ordinary duties. To one side was a four-wheeler, and, himself unseen,

Bruce noticed Bolger bargaining with the driver. That individual appeared obdurate over the fare offered; it was a long way to go—to Chinatown.

Bruce caught the detective's destination with a thrill of surprise. As the "taxi" emerged slowly from the press of carts and wagons he saw that Miss Flossie had already entered the closed carriage; from out of the shadows her eyes seemed to shine like those of a fair but ruthless Nemesis. The young man pressed back farther in his seat. A net seemed closing tighter and tighter about him, a close net, with no large apertures, sweeping around, apparently covering all the ground, every point. At this crisis in his affairs, however, he had no time to think of Bolger or Miss Burke while one single, more important incursion against his defenses was in progress—Cagliani's.

Here was a foeman, wily, subtle, with many expedients at his finger tips, that he had learned long ago, in that region where the Golden River enters the plain under the title of the "Sorrow of Han." But Bruce had beaten him then; ah, yes, he had beaten him then, he could repeat to himself, with eyes brightly gleaming, this yellow wolf in sheep's clothing!

Bruce drew a cigarette from his case. They went very slowly at times, now were delayed altogether, where the street was torn up, and then began slowly to forge ahead once more. The "taxi" finally stopped abruptly, this time at his destination, the express office. He sprang out swiftly.

Too late! A man had already called for the parcel, observed the clerk in some surprise. The clerk remembered well the parcel referred to, for it was among those that had just come in from the station; it bore a name in English and also several peculiar marks, outlandish Eastern characters of some kind. His recollections were the more distinct in the matter on account of those odd tracings in ink. Bruce felt the eyes of James, the valet, now waiting without, fixed upon him as he pursued these inquiries and received the information that the parcel was un-

doubtedly gone, had passed into Caglioni's possession.

"Why do you ask?" The clerk's gaze bent across the counter upon Bruce more curiously.

Bruce regarded him as from afar. "This person who called for the parcel, what was he like? Did you happen to notice?"

The man *had* noticed; after a moment's hesitation, he described Caglioni. The name of him to whom the parcel had been directed was Chinese; Sir Archibald's secretary had a fugitive Oriental look about the eyes. He appeared of high class, a mandarin, maybe, thought the clerk, who had vague ideas of Far Eastern personages. Bruce turned. Not a movement on his part had escaped the vigilant watcher in the vehicle without. But before leaving the express office the young man inadvertently paused at the sight of a newspaper lying on the counter, an "extra" whose flaring red color seemed fairly to call out: "Where are the Goldberg pearls?" Bruce picked up the sheet and forced even a jaunty accent to his tones.

"Quite a mysterious affair, eh?"

"Won't be for long," vouchsafed the individual behind the counter, "when the yellow papers get after it. They'd run down anything."

Bruce did not controvert the statement. To one observing him, walking out, his stride might have been construed as that of a light-hearted, care-free person; the onlooker would have failed to guess from his bearing that the news he had just received had awakened his worst fears, the despair of one who, it might be, has seen a last hope doomed to failure, who sets foot again on the pavement to go he knows not whither, but always accompanied by the black shadow clutching, drawing him down, deeper, deeper, into a black gulf.

Four or five blocks distant from the express office, at that moment, a little man in excellent spirits holding close in his arms a package, dashed in a cab down one of the principal thorough-

fares. Every now and then he looked down at the parcel; it was tied around and around both ways many times with twine; there were indications of knots galore, buried beneath the sealing wax Simpson had plentifully deluged them with at the little office in the village of Conscot. And every red daub bore plainly the stamp of the express company at that town; Mr. Wood's man, acting under instructions, no doubt, had done his share of the work well.

The package might have contained debentures and bonds, for all the care bestowed upon it. Dress suit, forsooth! Done up with such care no one could open it or peep into it without leaving evidence of his prying fingers! Caglioni, however, had no desire to burst the bonds of the precious parcel yet. It was more precious as it stood; he would not, for a fortune, have touched a fastening. Perhaps Bruce at that moment might vainly be hoping he would do so at once, without witnesses, and thus furnish a possible loophole or leeway for protest. But Caglioni was wily; he would only lift the lid of this Pandora's box when the time seemed right. And that would be soon—soon!

Even now, at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Twenty-third Street, he saw a large maroon-colored car draw up and stand waiting. The splendid equipage was covered with dust and dirt; the chauffeur had been plentifully splashed; two occupants in the rear were fairly coated. Apparently the car had been speeding at a high rate over a road in places none too good, such as those that ran out from Conscot. The little brown man in the cab espied it almost immediately, called up to his driver, indicating it, and waved an excited hand toward the occupants. They, too, now observed him and responded to the secretary's gestures. The cab dashed up. Caglioni got out and stepped quickly toward the others.

"Eureka!" observed Sir Archibald grimly, eying him from his seat. "I think we may congratulate you," he added to his companion.

THE SMART SET

Mr. Goldberg made a gurgling sound in his throat. "It was all right, then?" he asked tremulously.

"All right," answered the secretary, barely able to conceal his satisfaction.

"Then get in," said the Baronet quietly.

XVII

JAMES, the valet, not long afterward, standing at one end of a lower hall in the Waldorf, motioned to a page who passed at that moment. Slipping a coin into the boy's hand, he asked him to see if Sir Archibald Bamford had yet returned to his suite of rooms on the sixth floor.

The boy was gone but a short while; when he came back he conveyed the news that Sir Archibald had not yet returned to town, but that word had been received that he expected soon to reoccupy his suite. Hastily scribbling a note, James placed it in an envelope, sealed it and bade the page give it to the young lady at the desk on the sixth floor, with very especial instructions that Sir Archibald was to get it at once on his arrival.

Mr. Bruce, eating his lunch at a little side table in the Palm Room, no doubt thought himself now free from espionage. He might, indeed, with good reason, fancy he had escaped from his troublesome follower in one of the crowded department stores in which he had taken refuge; but James, keen as a fox terrier, had managed to keep to his task. He had even changed his vehicle for one different in appearance, and that the young man was unaware of his presence at the moment in the big hostelry he felt fairly well assured.

To keep his quarry better in view, James shifted his seat to one in the Turkish Room; there, amid an atmosphere of luxury, with a murmur of soft voices around him and a swish of feminine draperies sweeping the perfumed air to his senses, the valet settled himself, well contented at his post of reconnoissance. Between green palm branches and curtain folds he could distinguish a part of Bruce's figure,

but he could not see his face. James clasped his fingers over his knees and waited.

Bruce had ordered a modest luncheon. He looked into space as he gave his order; his mind was far away. Now he leaned his head on his elbow and watched a woman's graceful form. She had the straight, slender suppleness of another, who came to his mind at that moment.

He had forgotten James. A millionaire gambler of the "Street" paused to speak with him. Bruce looked up gaily. At the same moment a stocky individual, standing in the doorway, caught the young man's eye. Mr. Bolger, slightly flushed, seemed seeking someone. The match Bruce was at that instant holding to a cigarette did not waver, although he shaded his face slightly more with his hand; but the sharp eyes of the detective had seen him. He came forward.

"May I sit down?" he remarked brusquely.

The young man regarded him, seemingly looking through and through him. Bolger shifted with the least embarrassment in the chair he had dropped into.

"It seems to me you have," said the young man, with straight gaze and immovable features.

The other made a gesture. "I was going downtown, when I saw Sir Archibald in his car," remarked the detective. "After a few words with him, I thought it as well to come back. In fact," with much satisfaction, "Sir Archibald has intrusted to me a little commission. He has at this moment returned to his rooms here, and would be pleased to have you honor him for a few moments with your company."

There was a satirical look on Bolger's commonplace countenance as he spoke, an expression that seemed to say: "That was very well done for outward politeness; come now, wasn't it—quite worthy the surroundings, eh?"

Bruce blew a whiff of smoke over the other. His mind was very busy at the moment; he saw on a sudden a

map of his surroundings, considered the entrance and exits. Alas! the Palm Room had been located in almost the center of the ground floor, the very inner parlor of the spider's web, as it were. Bruce looked at the merry people around him, then glanced casually toward a door. Waiters moved here and there between him and it, and outside were numerous attendants; a liveried man and one for the vehicles had their station at the entrance. Bolger, as reading all that might have flashed through the young man's brain in the brief interval, smiled cruelly.

"You wouldn't disappoint Sir Archibald, I hope," he observed with a suspicion of a grin. Large vistas had begun to open up before Bolger's inner vision. Pathways leading to fame, new honors and, what was better, new emoluments, seemed surely within grasp. He began to entertain a kind of friendly feeling for the young fellow; he didn't wish to hurry him, he observed, but—

Bruce's manner suddenly changed. He was no longer thoughtful, meditative; a haphazard, reckless gaiety that became him well appeared on his young, handsome face. He called the waiter and paid the bill. Taking the hat and stick that person deferentially handed him, he got up and passed his arm slightly through Bolger's—as if there was any danger of *that* individual escaping from him!

"So Sir Archibald's come to town, has he?" he remarked blithely. "That is good news, indeed. Just got here, you say? How delightful! Yacht or car? By motor, of course! He could hardly have reached the hotel otherwise so soon. But by what good fortune, may I ask, did you come to know where I was to be found, my good fellow?"

He paused with his head tilted slightly. The other looked at him with ill-concealed admiration; here was a cool one! "It was James, the valet," answered Bolger. "He left a note, which Sir Archibald found waiting for him upstairs."

"Ah!" For a moment Bruce said

no more. Here again was James, a live pawn, still in the game. But the young man's features showed no chagrin. He walked with a light footstep. Once or twice he nodded and spoke to someone. It was a concert afternoon; many of the town's élite had begun to arrive. Bolger commenced to feel a certain awe and wonder, as the young man mentioned by name several of the notables who bowed to him in passing. Oddly, the detective experienced an anomalous thrill of pleasure at the pressure of the arm of one acquainted with these stars of fashion and leaders of the upper ten thousand.

"Mr. Bruce!" It was not a member of that "higher" life who addressed him, but Miss Flossie. Her face wore a new look. "One moment!"

He greeted her with the grace of a Chesterfield. Bolger suffered them to move a little to one side, just out of earshot, no farther.

"You know—what is going to happen?" Miss Burke breathed agitatedly. He looked at her; the girl seemed to have undergone some subtle change since last he had seen her.

"I have just been informed that Sir Archibald is here," he answered lightly. "Such a charming surprise!"

"Surprise!" she repeated, her green eyes upon him. "Perhaps; but as for 'charming,' for you—" Her voice seemed in the least unsteady; he raised his brows slightly, quizzically. Instinctively she pressed nearer; her eyes with their quick changing lights were feline. "Listen," she said; "I had almost given them something very valuable to you. I don't quite know why I've changed my mind at just this last moment, the last instant, we may say"—with a catch in her breath—"but I have. I'll not give it to them now; I'll not do anything to add to what they may have against you!"

"I beg your pardon"—he spoke with an air of incredulity—"if I don't seem quite to understand!"

"You do!" she returned curtly. "Don't play, or I may—"

"My dear Miss Burke," he expostulated, "it is, believe me, you who

seem to be playing at enigmas—to mystify me, perhaps."

Her hand shot angrily into her bag; she seemed to forget Bolger.

"I think," remarked the soft voice of Bruce, still studying the newcomers, "Mrs."—he mentioned a name—"must have recovered from the agony of her second divorce. She appears very well, as you may note—over there."

Miss Flossie's face was a study; she had looked into her bag and apparently had not found what she sought. Bruce laughed, as at something in the vague distance.

"I thought I saw you on the train," he observed, his glance returning casually to her. "Weren't you in the parlor car? I usually patronize the common cars myself."

Her eyes were big with growing enlightenment, chagrin, overweening anger. "I left my bag a moment on—" She broke off. "I wish I had that paper now," she flashed at him in a low tone. "I wouldn't be such a fool as not to—"

Bruce waved a playful finger. "Enigmas," he said. And then lightly: "Women, I'm afraid, are sometimes as mysterious as—changeable!" Again he laughed; but as Bolger stepped forward, some of the merriment seemed to fade from his lips.

Was he weakening, Miss Flossie asked herself, at the supreme moment? Yes, she was sure. Angrily, triumphantly, she crumpled her handkerchief in her hand. His face looked a little strained, in spite of all his acting, as he walked away; and she, who had been sorry a short time before for a very brief while, was now glad—glad! He hadn't a chance, she knew, not one! And he, Chatfield Bruce, must know it, too, as he stepped on with gayness, at best now but simulated. She saw his tall figure a moment yet in the distance, the flash of his pale face; then he and Bolger stepped into the elevator. But that final look she got of him seemed to reiterate to her brain that he was not so assured as he seemed, that he felt certain the crucial, disastrous moment, long hanging over him, had at last arrived.

XVIII

"Come in!" called out Sir Archibald, and Bolger and Chatfield Bruce entered the elaborately furnished parlor of the Baronet's suite on the sixth floor.

Had Miss Burke seen Bruce at that moment she would have found certain of her surmises going by the board. If the young man had felt himself wavering, he had recovered; he had never appeared to better advantage than now. His clothes draped to perfection his tall figure; even his tie had a delicate, definite distinctness of its own; upon his finger gleamed the curious ring of Oriental design. Bruce's features were composed; indicated only a gentle inquiry and pleasure at this unexpected meeting again with the Englishman. The latter shot his glance steadily before him; then into his gaze came an expression of satisfaction.

"Good breeding," thought Sir Archibald, and thrust his big hands into his trousers' pockets. This was an antagonist worthy of his steel at every stage, even the last.

Sir Archibald had pushed Mr. Goldberg rather hastily aside from a table over which the latter was bending when Bolger's knock sounded; the parcel which the owner of the pearls had quickly started to undo the Baronet had taken pains to conceal beneath a few newspapers, before calling out to the newcomers to enter.

"Excellent quarters," Bruce remarked, his stick at his chin, looking around in apparently appreciative survey of draperies and rugs—"although these steel engravings are a bit conventional. Too much just what you'd expect in any hotel, don't you know?" he laughed.

"Yes, they're comfortable enough quarters," Sir Archibald laughed in his turn rather shortly, "although it was not exactly for that reason I again sought them." Briton fashion, he leaped without too much delay into the trench.

Across the room Cagliani sat in a corner on the edge of a great chair.

"I trust we are not inconveniencing you?" said Sir Archibald with sardonic humor.

"Not at all," said Bruce. "As I informed your affable *commissionnaire*," indicating Bolger, "I was quite charmed with the glad tidings that one so distinguished had again appeared in our midst."

The Englishman colored slightly. "Then we aren't interfering with any of your numerous engagements?" came from his lips with a barely perceptible sneer.

"When I accepted your charming invitation, I could think of no other engagement at the time," answered the young man. "Since our little conversation in the Palm Room"—he turned to Bolger—"a small matter has occurred to me which may, I fear, abridge somewhat our delightful interview."

"Abridge, eh?" Bamford laughed harshly. "You are in a hurry to get it over?"

"There is another call on my time," observed Bruce gently. "Not an imperative one, not exactly necessary, still, one that appeals to the inclinations, you understand."

Sir Archibald drew out a big cigar. He had been initiated into the national game of poker, and had experience with that innocent maneuver called "bluffing." His expression of hostility became tinctured with a small measure of commendation; the young man was, after all, playing his cards with desperation, daring, rare *sang-froid*—poor cards that gave him no opportunity to win out, resourceful and skillful though he might be. Sir Archibald, in his own mind, was quite sure of this, and he felt positive that Bruce knew it also; the latter but kept stubbornly to his place at the green board, fighting, as it were, until the last, figuring every chance, preserving a bold front; he would go down with a gay laugh. The Englishman had the grace to offer him a cigar which Bruce refused courteously. From somewhere below came a few notes of music; a trill, dying in the distance, was wafted in through an open window. The socially most pop-

ular *cantatrice* was engaged in charming her admirers with one of her grand arias.

"Let's get down to business," Mr. Goldberg broke forth rather explosively, when the music ceased.

"Business?" observed Bruce.

"Yes; this ain't no social occasion," Goldberg muttered viciously.

The young man allowed his gaze to rest once more on the other. "There is a little matter of business," he said musingly, half to himself. "Thanks so much for reminding me."

"Little!" repeated Mr. Goldberg. "I don't know," with ill concealed fury, "that I should call it very 'little.'"

"True," murmured Bruce, "it might be deemed of some slight importance to you, but to speak of it here"— He made a deprecatory gesture. "Shall we not take it up later by ourselves? It would really seem more proper, don't you know."

"I guess there's no time like the present," blurted the other, his glance swinging stormily toward the table and what lay on it beneath the newspapers. He took a step in that direction, when Sir Archibald put out a detaining arm.

"If you please!" he expostulated. "All in good time, my dear sir."

Bruce's glance now saw something peeping out from beneath the white papers—a bit of yellow, an end of the parcel. His figure seemed to stiffen. Sir Archibald observed the involuntary movement. His thick lips relaxed; his heavy jaw less firmly set, showed evidence of returning good humor. How much longer would the other hold to his high-handed manner? When would he cast it aside and break down altogether? Sir Archibald had seen pretty stiff men lose their grit before this.

"You were speaking," he remarked with grim irony to Bruce, "of a little matter of business with Mr. Goldberg. We are all acquaintances here"—there was a world of unctuousness behind the words—"and what you have to say, you may, with Mr. Goldberg's permission"—that gentleman nodded overvigorously—"tell us all."

"No, no," said Bruce, recovering on the instant his debonair bearing, "I really shouldn't, believe me." Cagliioni's eyes became more piercing; a deep breath escaped him. "Well, since you desire to make a rather unimportant private matter public," went on Bruce in the same tone, "it was on my mind to speak to Mr. Goldberg about tendering my resignation, because," as that person opened his mouth to speak, "my conscience—pardon the use of a word almost obsolete—has for some time suggested to me the advisability of such a course."

"Your—" began Mr. Goldberg, with bulging eyes.

"Conscience," repeated the young man, with a certain whimsical, firm dignity. "I fear it is somewhat a lost attribute among certain of our bustling, striving classes. Be that as it may, shall I constitute myself my neighbor's keeper?"

"However," went on Bruce airily, "we are all our own keepers. Perhaps I should not in this case be too particular," he added meditatively; "all the other houses are in it. However—" He made a gesture.

Sir Archibald did not quite understand; all this was Greek to him. Bolger began to shift about. He, too, failed to comprehend the drift of the talk, or why it had been suffered to drift. From his standpoint there was but one thing to do, and that, to his official sense, seemed so simple on the surface. Goldberg's face, however, began to be a study in enlightenment; some of the red faded from it; the surface presented rather a mottled appearance.

"Perhaps, since you force me to speak publicly," said Bruce to this last person, "it would be better for yourself if we employ the language of your fatherland." He uttered these words in German, and went on in that same tongue: "Sir Archibald does not understand; one can tell from his expression. Bolger, I'm sure, knows only American, and as for Cagliioni, he does not comprehend one word I'm saying. *Nicht wahr du dummer Kerl?*" He addressed

the secretary suddenly. That person only glared; Bruce continued cheerily:

"But we were speaking of conscience and evaded tributes to Uncle Sam, for the alleged protection of our overgrown infant industries."

He took from his pocket a cigarette case, and it poised delicately in his fingers. Sir Archibald stood and waited, with a strong man's patience. What mattered a little comedy more or less before the tragedy? He felt himself master.

"Protection!" observed Bruce in the same frivolous tones, with faultless Teutonic accent. "A ridiculous, archaic, Chinese kind of great wall perhaps, still, one that exists to exact toll from the merchandise-laden camels and mules that stop at its gates—or from some of them, for there are those that slip through. One might not stick at a small evasion. But when it reaches a figure of, say, one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars in a single year! You will accept my resignation, will you not? Yes? I read it in your face. And now—"

He did not finish the sentence. The ironical look faded; the smile returned, then became apologetic. "It is really too bad to talk business on such a day!" broke from him now in English. "All sunshine without! Would it not be more fitting to speak of lighter matters—music, for instance?" as again a faint sound of a woman's high tones was heard. "'*Amico — amour*' — what a beautiful phrase!"

Mr. Goldberg said not a word. Cagliioni leaned forward as if he divined that the quarry had somehow drawn back a little too far from them. The Englishman's poise was that of a Colossus; his powerful face wore a derisive look; as he grasped the back of a chair, the big veins stood out upon his hand. He was a study of vigor, of irresistible, puissant purpose. Beside him Bruce looked slender, slight.

"*Farceur!*" Sir Archibald's lips breathed contemptuously. Between him and Bruce was ever the suggestion of another presence, existing only in the mind, yet as tangible as if it stood

there in the flesh—a girl's figure, the blue of her eyes, the raven blackness of her hair. The Englishman frowned deeply; with a brusque gesture, he whipped the newspapers from the parcel and brought down a heavy fist on the edge of the table.

"Mr. Goldberg can't compromise in this case now," he said emphatically. "It's too late. Hocus-pocus with him won't do. There's more than the pearls in clearing this affair up; Mr. Page stays back of it." He indicated with drawn brows the detective, Bolger. "And it's going to be settled here—now!"

Bruce had the courage not to wince. He looked quickly around again toward the door. Bolger stepped to it; the sharp, metallic click of a key followed. Bruce's hand rested against a bit of drapery, as if to derive needed support from it; his gaze turned to Goldberg, but that person looked down. One of Sir Archibald's hands was in a side pocket; the young man instinctively knew what his fingers grasped and held in readiness there. Cagliani's lips protruded; the yellow teeth were in evidence.

Bruce, though so outnumbered, drew himself up straight. Sir Archibald saw no signs of flinching now; even at the moment when the knife, poised over Bruce, seemed about to fall, the young man's eyes continued to rest on the parcel. Sir Archibald's thick lips indulged in a sound like a laugh. Bolger's fingers sought his hip pocket. He drew nearer, watchful, ready for the climax. One could not tell, in cases of this kind, what a person desperate, driven into a corner might do, or attempt to do.

"I really beg your pardon," said Bruce curtly, "but I think that is my parcel."

"It is a parcel you sent," corrected Sir Archibald.

"To be called for at the express office," went on the young man with sharp accents—"but not by you."

"No? You did not expect that, did you? However, not only have we called for it," observed Sir Archibald,

"but we are going so far to take the law into our own hands as to open it."

"I forbid you!" said Bruce trenchantly, with flashing eyes. "You have absolutely no right. A purloined parcel—"

"Purloined!" exclaimed the Englishman, and tore contemptuously, roughly, at the fastenings. His strong hands soon broke them, cast the twine aside and ripped open the heavy paper.

Bruce stepped quickly forward, with menacing gesture, but Bolger stopped him. "No, you don't!" he said, and something gleaming in his hand emphasized his words.

Sir Archibald unfolded the garments that were revealed and shook them savagely. An expression of surprise came to his face. He shook them again, with more violence; then his other hand began to search hastily, frantically.

"What's this?" breathed Sir Archibald thickly.

"Not here!" muttered Cagliani.

A sudden consternation fell upon all except Bruce. "If you have done shaking my clothes—" he began, with just resentment.

No one replied. He walked toward the door; they did not try to stop him.

"I shall expect," said the young man, "my evening suit to be returned to me at my rooms without delay. It is the only one, such as it is, I possess, and, I'm quite sure, it won't fit any of you."

The key turned. The door opened, then closed. The three men looked at one another.

"Find that damned valet of mine," roared Sir Archibald to Bolger, "and send him up here at once!"

"Nothing important happened, eh?" said Sir Archibald to the now rather pallid James, standing before them. "You say, however, someone ran into him at the station, just after he left the train?"

"Yes, sir; a dark man, well dressed."

"Might have been an Oriental?"

James conceded he might have been. Sir Archibald, in an unusual outburst

THE SMART SET

of temper, threw open his hands. "It is quite clear!" he exclaimed with a savage oath.

The singer had just executed a beautiful cadenza and received much applause and a gorgeous bouquet, as Bruce, who had remembered he had some time ago subscribed for the occasion, entered the concert hall below and sank unobtrusively into a seat at the side. He saw but a final flutter of her; then the orchestra burst into melody. The metaphysics it conveyed filtered through the discerning listeners' brains. What superb tangles, what irreconcilable intricacies! Bruce yielded to the spell. Leaning back, he half closed his eyes; it promised to be a delightful afternoon!

XIX

BUT Bruce had not calculated on a few disagreeable after-moments more trying than any he had heretofore undergone. Buttoning his coat, about an hour later, he started to walk to his rooms. The concert, a special, out-of-season affair, had terminated early, to give people time to flit back to their summer places. The gaiety of Fifth Avenue was not that of the metropolis at its best; nearly all the dwellings were closed; a monotonous array of windows with curtains drawn looked out upon the Park.

At length the young man's brisk pace brought him to the big building on a comparatively quiet street where his rooms were located. At one side of the marble entrance hall was a little waiting room for visitors; passing it to reach the elevator, Bruce noticed the draperies move. Then he saw someone, and stopped, as if stunned. Recovering himself with a great effort, he stepped in. For the first time that day composure seemed to leave him. He looked at her as one might stare at a ghost.

"Miss Wood!" he said.

Her eyes were brilliant. Beneath her composure could be felt a great

perturbation; she looked at him strangely.

"I don't quite know why I came unless—" She paused, her hands tightly clasped. It was easy to see she was not herself. She stood there as if under a spell.

His face was troubled. "Never mind!" he said in a low tone.

Did he not know—did she herself not know what had brought her there?

"I—I found the key near Mr. Goldberg's," she said, with an uplift of the dark lashes.

"Indeed!" he answered. Why did he not say something else? She waited.

"I came because I thought you might, *must* be in great danger, terrible trouble—" The words faltered.

"No danger," he said almost brusquely. "It was rather foolish of you."

"No danger!" she repeated, as if not hearing his last words. "But I overheard Sir Archibald and his valet—" A flush dyed her face. "I caught words, I do not know just what—terrible words—or what seemed beneath them—his tone. And you had gone—"

"Believe me," he said gravely, "all is as well with me as it ever can be. Your father knows you are here?" he asked abruptly.

"I—I believe I said something about the subscription concert."

He looked at his watch. "You have just time for the last express." As he spoke, he held back the curtain; she walked out and followed him to the front door. A "taxi" was passing. Bruce nodded to the man; he drew up to the curb. The girl now was very pale.

"I—I—don't understand," she said; "I wish I did."

He looked at her. "Perhaps it is as well not," he said slowly.

"You mean we shall never meet again?" she said.

"Yes." His face, too, was pale.

"Then, I shall never know more than now—always be in the dark, the terrible dark?"

"Wait." He considered. "Will you

see me once more, just once, so that perhaps you may understand just a little better?"

"I remember," she said, "you were brave for me, and," with a trembling smile, "I liked you for it. When one makes a friend—"

The words died away. A cold draft from the half-open door of the hall swept out upon them; she shivered slightly.

"Why," he said, "if you will so honor me, we shall meet once more. Perhaps I can explain better—such little explanation," he added bitterly, "as there may be to make!"

"When?" said the girl, with clearer, more steadfast eyes.

"The night of the Japanese play—at your house, if you will."

"Yes, yes," she said. "Somehow, I believe in you. I can't understand; I don't. Anything you may say to make me know, to—" She hesitated.

"To clear up the horrible doubts?" he suggested.

A mist sprang to her eyes. She moved toward the curb and stepped into the waiting vehicle.

"Grand Central Station," he said to the driver.

"Aren't you—" She looked at the place by her side.

A radiant light came to his face. She did not understand; she was full of doubts; but she did not altogether disbelieve in him! He bent his head as to a princess, peerless, unattainable, beautiful. Her hair was a dark cloud; the mist in her eyes was like rain, momentarily dimming the blue.

"Thank you, but if you don't need me—"

She sank back and said no further word. The cab moved away. Bruce stood with his hat in his hand, even after it had disappeared.

"I slipped your mail under your door, sir." The voice was that of Stebbins, the janitor.

Bruce moved automatically back into the hall and took the elevator to his rooms.

His mail was large and comprised many invitations. Hunting, fishing,

yachting, golfing and polo playing constituted a few of the inducements held forth to summon him here and there, away from the noisy metropolis. He set them aside, to be answered punctilioiusly with conventional regrets.

A letter from China fell from the next envelope he opened—news of business, good business. He had almost forgotten there was such a business. He read to the end of the polite communication indifferently and laid it down. But the next missive held his attention longer; his brows drew together. He looked more closely at the signature. "Ting! Urgent need!" A new, more pressing and dangerous complication had unexpectedly risen.

He got up. Leaving the room hastily, he carefully locked his door, descended to the street and made his way to a nearby station of the Elevated. For what seemed to him an interminable time the train whirled him on; at length, however, he got out and walked some distance. Night was falling; the lights of the squalid neighborhood in which he found himself seemed battling with the shadows.

As he made his way quickly up this street and down that, he became for the first time aware of two slouching figures he remembered having noticed in the train; they moved after him, keeping him always in sight. They were rough, unpleasant-looking fellows. He did not know them, but that signified nothing; they had merely superseded James. Sir Archibald was by no means beaten yet; he confessed only to a temporary rebuff.

A little farther, and he stopped abruptly, on pretense of looking into a miserable shop window. The fellows following almost rubbed elbows with him; nevertheless he seemed not to notice.

Nearby his alert senses caught a faint tinkling, made by tiny bits of glass that, hanging pendent and swayed by the wind, gave forth a crystalline murmur. An odd, half-timorous little sound, that seemed to shrink from mingling with the multisonous intonation of the great metropolis, to whisper

apart, as if, indeed, according to certain affirmation, the more or less honorable spirits of the dead babbled their messages through this dulcet medium.

A moment Bruce stood; then he wheeled suddenly and crossed a threshold. He found himself in one of the tea houses and restaurants frequented mostly by Orientals. Seemingly not a large place, it was really a network of rooms of sufficient size to accommodate many guests, transient and otherwise. At a far end of one of the front apartments, a little girl, with that Raphael face and expression encountered so often in the Orient, picked from a musical instrument the stray single notes of what was intended to be a melody.

Bruce took his place at a small side table and an Oriental brought him a pot of white, steaming liquor. The young man toyed with the cup while he glanced around. The two fellows he had observed had remained outside, near the front entrance, presumably. From the next room came the low murmur of voices. The young man listened; a native banquet was evidently in progress. Bruce stopped his waiter and spoke to him. The latter nodded, indicated with his hand, and the young man followed him to the back of the place through a side hall. Here were several winding ways and a number of doors. One of these the young man opened, then crossed a narrow court and found himself not long afterward in another little passage which led into a small room—one he had been in before, just prior to his visit to Conscot. He had come there then to ask a favor of Ting, dealer in curios and precious, or would-be precious stones. Sir Archibald and his secretary, ostensibly "Doing Chinatown," had nearly surprised him on that occasion in the place.

He had hardly known her then—and so much had transpired since! It was only the night before he had danced with her. Could so much history be compressed in a day? He stood in darkness now, thinking of her. But twenty-four hours before had been movement, joy, dazzling lights. Now his hands, reaching out, touched but

that emptiness, his future portion. Another would woo her and win her—this strong, aggressive Englishman, with his titles and landed interests; she would rule in the stately and superb home of the Bamfords. The romance for Bruce had been very brief; the awakening had come with stunning abruptness. Dreams, dreams! An hour of wonderful glamour; and afterwards—how he could laugh at himself there in the black night!

He threw back his head abruptly; it was no time for such thoughts. The need for action pressed on him; he had use for his wits now, truly. Caglioni had hit upon a definite trail at last. He held the thread delicately but surely; the net was out, and the secretary, master hand in that Oriental environment, was drawing it in—with what delight, what feverish zest!

Or, came the chilling possibility, perhaps it had already been drawn in! Bruce held his head to the door communicating with the inner room. From it came no sound; an ominous stillness reigned. His fingers pressed somewhere on the framework. The door opened; he stepped in. The room, dimly lighted with wax candles, was empty; a faint aromatic odor filled the air; a bit of jade on a scarlet string, was the only thing that moved. Bruce stood still in the center of that strange apartment. He held his head somewhat high; his eyes gleamed. The last stand! Well, so be it! His gaze caressed a small vial he took from his pocket, then suddenly shifted.

A soft patter, patter, without caught his attention. They had come. The other way was guarded, the more devious way out through the restaurant. They had set the snare and he had walked into it. And yet he could not well have done otherwise. But stay! The hand busy at the complicated Chinese lock was a quiet one; now one bolt shot back softly, then another. Bruce waited; a breathless moment and the door suddenly was flung noiselessly open and as quickly closed again and relocked. Ting, with fear in his eyes, stood before the young man.

"They are following?" Bruce spoke quickly.

"Yes."

"How many?"

"One, but there will be more."

"What is he like?"

"Yellow, with a black beard."

"Caglioni!" murmured Bruce. "Of course. You wrote me from where?"

"The messenger office."

The other looked down. "And he let you do it? But how," he said in a tense, clear, though low voice, "did it happen that he chanced to catch sight of you in the first place?"

"He is cunning as the fox. He learned what ship sailed today for the Orient, and saw Ting as he would have gone aboard."

"And so you dodged back?" The young man laughed recklessly. Cunning, truly, was Caglioni, as Ting said. "And swift," the young man added in his own thoughts. While he, Bruce, had been listening to modern musical idiosyncrasies with doltlke absorption, the secretary had called for a paper, looked at the steamship list and acted accordingly. From a consideration of what James might have said about someone bumping into Bruce at the station, to this searching the press for news of the first outward bound steamer for the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, had constituted a logical and quick mental process on the part of Caglioni.

"Perhaps you got rid of him. It may be he did not follow you here," observed Bruce with sudden hope in his voice.

Ting's answer dispelled any possible optimism on the subject; he gazed out through a narrow aperture in the heavy blinds into the street. "He is there," he said, "and another—a big man."

"Sir Archibald," murmured Bruce. Again he looked at the tiny vial, a dainty, beautiful curio in its minute way, and once more put it back. "Tiens!" he laughed. "Not yet."

"They are coming this way," said Ting.

"Well, let them! As the gods or the immortal spirits will!" A precipitate

light shone from his eyes. "We'll play out the game."

XX

THE thoroughfare was narrow and dark in places, but at that point the gleam of a street lamp not many yards distant cast an uncertain glimmer on surrounding objects. Through a fine slanting rain, almost a mist, that had begun to fall, the wavering light revealed for an instant two figures who had now stopped in a doorway across the street and a little aside from Ting's modest establishment. Then, having lent grudging visibility to them and the immediate environment for a moment, the glow suddenly sputtered and nearly went out, but seeming to reconsider its threatening intention of plunging that section of the thoroughfare into total gloom, flared up once more and showed another person, roughly dressed, coming around a corner and approaching at a quick, shambling gait. This third man paused at the sight of the two men in the semi-shelter of the doorway; one of the latter, who held a cigar that glowed like a tiny coal, spoke to the newcomer with sharp, imperative inquiry.

"He's gone into the restaurant," replied the third person, "and he's there now, unless—" He broke off. "There's a back entrance from that place into this shop," he added abruptly, nodding toward Ting's door. "And maybe he's made use of it and is in there."

Sir Archibald replied with a brief order; the man at once turned and walked hastily back the way he had come. Caglioni's eyes followed him, a black shadow on the faintly shining stones, then returned watchfully toward Ting's house.

"No mistake this time!" observed Sir Archibald in curt, short tones, turning up the collar of his coat.

"None," said Caglioni, without removing his bright gaze from the door. "I didn't want to take chances, and so summoned you and told you to communicate with the others."

"You are quite sure of your man—

that you've followed the right one who got the pearls at the station?"

"Not only did he answer the description James gave of him, but I recognized in the fellow a dealer in curios and artificial pearls we had met before. You remember, surely, this very place; he had in his showcases the pearl Buddhas made by the process discovered by Ye-Jin-Yang in the thirteenth century. Oh, there's no room for error now!" Cagliani's voice vibrated. "I would stake my life on it."

"I wonder," said Sir Archibald cynically, and a little curiously, "why you bring so much of that Latin temperament of yours into this matter—on a cursed damp night, too—as if there might be something almost personal between you and—this Bruce!"

"Personal!" Cagliani shrugged. "I do not forget last night near the Goldberg house."

"Only that?"

The secretary's eyes burned into the night; he did not answer. Sir Archibald, too, remained silent a few moments. Perhaps he was just then thinking of something "personal," himself, between him and this fellow. His wooing had, somehow, come to an abrupt standstill. But after tomorrow when she would know, when he could speak and tell all—when all the world would know, for that matter—ah, then! Delectable consummation! And Sir Archibald's look, fastened on the doorway opposite, seemed at that instant as grimly eloquent as the glint of a bayonet bent on the business of the empire.

"Time Bolger was here," he observed abruptly in harsh accents, puffing harder at his cigar.

"There he comes now!" Cagliani's voice was full of eager malice. "And his men with him!"

"Of course! In a raid of this kind there must be no slipping through the meshes."

Both men looked down the street at the distant, dimly seen forms drawing nearer. At the same moment the arc lamp began once more to sputter. Red, sullen sparks fell from it; leaping

shadows danced this way and that. The wind set a street sign to creaking dolorously. Another sound mingled with it, that of a door hurriedly swung out and back again, as someone—an Oriental, by his dress—slipped from Ting's place and started swiftly down the street.

"The Chinaman! He's discarded his European clothes!" exclaimed Cagliani.

"Quick! After him! He must not escape. I'll see that Bruce doesn't get away. It may only be a ruse to draw us from the door."

The secretary waited no longer, but sped at once after the fleeing figure. In the momentary darkness it seemed to elude him, to fade from view. Then, by the aid of another street lamp less capricious, he caught sight of Ting's form once more. But the rain, coming down faster, aided the fugitive; it had sent people indoors. The block ahead was deserted, as seemed the little alley into which the frightened Chinaman turned next.

Cagliani began to breathe low malevolitions; it was not difficult to divine the cause of the Oriental's sudden, desperate flight. He had learned there were men in front of the restaurant, and guessed the next move of the aggressors. Returning the pearls, no doubt, to Bruce, Ting had trusted to his legs and the darkness to extricate himself once and for all from the affair. On the morrow he would not be found; his shop would be deserted, and no trace of him would ever again be discovered by those of the Occidental race. Did not Cagliani know—had he not had experience with Ting and his kind, who can slip out of the narrowest places, and disappear as completely as if they had faded into thin air?

The secretary set his teeth. This yellow devil was pursuing his tactics of earlier in the day; but he would get him now. He was a necessary link in the chain of evidence to rid himself of one whom he had such excellent reason to fear—Chatfield Bruce, a constant menace to Cagliani's own peace of mind, his safety, his life even! The

secretary ran faster; he saw with gratification the distance between him and the other lessening. Ting, at first, had given evidence of unusual fleetness, greater even than Caglioni himself could boast; obviously, however, the Chinaman's staying power was not now all it might have been. He appeared to slacken and weaken, running like a man who could go but little farther. They were now a couple of blocks from the scene of the proposed raid. Caglioni did not doubt his ability soon to return there with his man. He did not imagine that the other would resist; the Chinaman, by nature, is a man of peace and will yield, without striking back, when pushed into a corner.

Near the street Ting went on yet more slowly; there would be, however, no convenient cab for him to slip into when he reached that thoroughfare. Caglioni felt fairly assured of this; the other would not now escape the secretary's longing fingers. Peremptorily Caglioni's voice rose above the patter of the rain. The fellow heard; he had no choice apparently but to obey the stern command. He paused, seemingly out of breath, his hand pressed to his side. But the secretary took precautions not to be deceived by a ruse; he understood the Oriental's inborn cunning, and as he stepped briskly forward, was prepared for any artifice or emergency.

"Lift a finger to resist, and—" His voice conveyed a sibilant menace; the gleaming weapon in his hand lent it emphasis.

Ting's response was immediate, piteous, scarcely distinguishable for want of breath; pidgin English and Chinese dialect mingled confusedly in his imploring tones. He hoped, trusted, the honorable one would not take the most unworthy Ting back; he would pay, reward handsomely the honorable one, who was more exalted than the moon and the stars. The secretary contemptuously interrupted him; there was no mistaking the genuineness of Ting's apprehensions, expressed in that strange jargon.

"Come," said Caglioni scornfully,

laying a rough hand on the other's shoulder. "You'll pay and no mistake, but not me. March!"

The fellow obeyed; but his shoulder seemed to shrink at that touch and his implorings to become more earnest:

"Most honorable and illustrious—I implore—me, miserable one, lowly as the dust—"

He was trembling now, or—a shaft of light between walls suddenly fell on his face as they went forward. He was laughing! Caglioni started back.

"You—" he stammered in amazement, consternation.

"Drop it!" said Bruce smilingly. "Don't lift that arm, please; and just let that little plaything fall from your fingers. You will not hesitate, I trust"—the weapon in his own hand was against Caglioni's side—"to grant this slight request. Believe me, as a friend I advise you not to."

The secretary did not hesitate; it was he, now, who appeared unmanned. The alley was lonely, deserted, the very spot for a dark deed. Bruce bent suddenly forward and whispered a name into the secretary's ear. His low voice was at once gay and thrilling, very mocking, too. Caglioni trembled and leaned back against the wall as if for support; he had not heard that name for many years.

"Hush! Not here in this neighborhood, of all in New York!" Afar, through the storm, came the faint twang, twang of a Chinese musical instrument.

"Come," said Bruce facetiously. "Our little walk—shall we not take it? And our little talk—we must not miss that. I regret that the weather is not more favorable for a charming heart-to-heart conversation and stroll."

"How long have you known?" the secretary managed to say. All the antagonism had left him now; he glanced over his shoulder into the darkness as a man might turn for a moment to look back into a black past.

"I think," said Bruce easily, "I half placed you when first I saw you, although you had changed much and have a beard. It was your eyes that

gave me the first inkling of the truth; I never forget eyes."

They walked on out into the street, on and on, away from Ting's place.

"You thought I might recognize you some time," murmured Bruce, very close to the other, a hand in his pocket, holding now the something hard that just touched, made itself felt by his companion. "And so at Conscot, as I passed the back of Mr. Wood's place, you sought to make me a slight present, but only succeeded in notching my new straw hat."

"Would you believe me if I denied it?"

"You," murmured Bruce in mild surprise, "who have made lying a profession—beside whom Catiline, Lazarillo de Tormes and all the other *menteurs à triple étage* of history appear models of candor and veracity! You, my dear friend!" An accent of pained reproof manifested itself in his tones.

"I wish the 'slight present,' as you call it, had done more than notch a new hat," muttered Cagliani.

Bruce gave a carefree laugh. "How charming to see you recovering your spirits, my good fellow!" He stopped. "But, alas! soon now must we part. And never more do I expect to see you. Never more," he repeated—"mournful words!"

Cagliani looked at him. "I suppose that's not all, is it?" he asked.

"Almost." Bruce regarded him up and down. "I've arranged that if anything happens to me tonight your secret will not be kept. There's a bit of paper in my strong box with a little writing on it that will become the property of others in case—You understand?" The secretary swallowed. "The Nine-Times-Nine numbers only a few million members, more or less. I neither condemn nor approve of them; but they exist. I accept them merely as a fact. They never forget, nor forgive—if they know," he added significantly, "where to put their hands on whom they seek, the traitor, the one who betrayed them.

"Let us go back. You belonged to them; you sold their secrets. You even

managed to capture, for the reward offered, a certain benevolent pirate, when—well, when I, as you know, with a small band hurriedly organized from the 'children of the plain,' interfered. We freed Ting's father, the pirate, for good and sufficient reasons. It was great sport." Cagliani bestowed upon him a malicious look. "You did not find it so? You managed to escape, disguised, made your way by devious routes as a priest into upper India, where you fell in with our good but rather stupid friend, Sir Archibald"—the secretary's teeth grated—"who was engaged by his government in the vain task of eliminating the Nine-Times-Nine in India—eliminating by substitution, à la Anglo-Saxon, giving them something better! Unfortunately for you, wherever Buddhism reigns your life would have been forfeited if it became known who you were. Chance brought you here. You knew me—a possible menace to your own safety, and probably represented to Sir Archibald that I was a member of the Nine-Times-Nine—a mistake, though they forced on me this symbol of power among them out of gratitude for having saved one of their number—a better man than you!"

Bruce showed a ring with a design, the "Dawn," a circle above a straight line, the sun rising above the earth. "Very eloquent, these Chinese characters! Don't you think so?"

"I have no opinion," said the secretary sourly.

"And yet you should have, you who are part Chinese—your mother was a Manchu girl. Are you ashamed of her?"

"Come to the point!" said Cagliani hoarsely. Rage, terror, humiliation burned in his eyes.

"Oh, most filial son!" murmured Bruce softly; then his voice suddenly changed. "You," he went on crisply, "are thought to be dead; it was cleverly arranged on your part. Lo, you are found to be living! Is there a spot in this world where you would be safe from death—or, worse, from torture? You know these people."

Cagliani's expression showed that

he did. "What do you want?" he said.

Bruce's eye lighted approvingly. "I see you appreciate the point—fully!" he observed, with merry accent on the last word. "Too bad we did not understand each other better before, eh, *mon ami*? Since last night you have been to me slightly irritating, like a disagreeable insect. But I forgive you; between us in the future exist only halcyon thoughts."

"Anything more?" observed the secretary. His face wore an odd pallor; the rain dripped from him.

"You will leave New York tonight," said Bruce in the same gentle tones. "Make what excuses you please to Sir Archibald. You," waving his hand airily, "have ceased to be a factor in the New World, to all intents and purposes, have never been here or heard of such vain baubles as the Goldberg pearls; they have passed from your mind, as if they had never existed."

A moment he stood, a bizarre figure, in saturated silken garments. Then he made another gesture, half playful, though the light of his eyes had never been brighter, more compelling. Cagliani turned and moved silently away. Bruce looked after him, as more and more indistinct became the secretary's figure. At last it vanished in the rain.

XXI

Two months passed and nothing more was heard of the Goldberg pearls. The social season had opened at high pressure. New York was at its gayest, and the little affair at Conscot was apparently soon forgotten by everyone except a few of the principals closely concerned in it.

The raid on Ting's place had revealed nothing; the European clothes that unassuming dealer presumably had worn at the station and later could not be found. Cagliani, who could have brought evidence against the Oriental, had vanished, no one knew where, leaving a very unsatisfactory message behind him for Sir Archibald's

puzzled scrutiny. That last gentleman and Mr. Bolger found themselves at an absolute standstill. Since the afternoon in Sir Archibald's rooms at the Waldorf, Mr. Goldberg had developed a bad case of what the Englishman, in poker parlance, designated "frigid extremities"; he seemed reconciled, nay, rather anxious, to let the matter drop. Sir Archibald, secretly enraged, folded his arms, concealed his disgust and looked around for a new secretary. He found one, a nice little man, with an innocuous face and no past.

With the opening of the season the usual number of charitable occasions were, of course, in evidence, and, of these, none was looked forward to with more interest than the Oriental evening planned to take place at the spacious town house of Mr. Gordon Wood, especially as it was known that Mr. Chatfield Bruce had consented to appear in a Japanese play. That young man's histrionic ability was conceded to be of a high order; people said he would have made a character actor of much distinction had he adopted the stage as a profession, so great was his charm of manner and personal repose. He was at least the star of all the amateurs the city could boast of.

The night of the entertainment, Mr. Wood's house presented a scene of animation. The large concert room of the mansion had been transformed into a fair imitation of a Japanese theater; the characters in the play made their entrances and exits in Far Eastern style along the flower walk leading to the stage. The audience assembled for the most part in the little squares divided off for them in the orchestra; at the back of the room were half a dozen improvised boxes.

Chatfield Bruce, waiting for his cue in the men's green room, peered through an opening out into the "theater." On the stage a trio of genuine acrobats, paid performers from the land of the chrysanthemums, were entertaining the audience with juggling; between hangings of antique priest robes could be seen the people assembled in the cause

of charity. They accepted diminutive cups of hot *sake* or tea; a few of the men endeavored to make use of the tiny Japanese pipes, with more or less success and good-natured comment. All seemed to enjoy the novelty of the entertainment. Bruce was alone in the green room; those of the men who were to come on later now mingled with the people, as did the Japanese princesses and geisha girls who afterward were to appear in the play. These last moved about laughing and gay; among them he saw Miss Marjorie Wood.

With eyes very brilliant under the black lashes and cheeks deeply tinted, she appeared the young hostess *par excellence*, gracious and beautiful in her clinging Oriental robe of some silken, lustrous material, violet and blue in tone. Bruce's gaze followed her. He noted with what pride she held her head, the exquisite distinction that characterized her every movement.

To most of those in the audience the plot of the little play went for nothing; the production seemed mainly picturesque, replete with unreal people and titles, with many fantastic scenes. But the costumes and the acting of Chatfield Bruce and Marjorie Wood more than saved the day, or the evening. The young hostess, in the role of Miss Happy-for-a-Thousand-Years, presented, as the society reporters afterwards affirmed, an "adequate interpretation of that ironically felicitous part." When her lover, the beggar prince who robs the rich to give to the poor, was in the natural course of vicissitudes led to the executioner at the command of her future lord, the great Shogun, she "changed her state," very beautifully, in other words, died. And with artistic consistency she refused to come out again, in answer to numerous recalls, as did Mr. Bruce, after he was supposed to have paid the final penalty.

Instead, the curtain again went up and the audience was regaled with the sight of a single cherry tree. Had they remained quiet, they would have heard the faint sound of the wind. They could see, however, the branches of the

tree move, the blossoms fall one by one as the curtain went down for the last time on the pretty fluttering things. What did it mean? Several in the audience looked at one another. Was it symbolical?

Chatfield Bruce and Marjorie Wood stood now on the stage alone. Forgotten were the characters of the play; it was two real people who looked at each other.

"You said I might see you once more, and so I came tonight," he began.

"Yes," she answered. All the bright color had gone; she was very pale.

"I—I promised to explain a little," he went on inexorably, with seeming ease. He could not show her any of the pain that the knowledge of the immeasurable gulf between them made him feel. "But it would have been much easier just to have left, to have gone away without that."

She lifted her eyes slightly. "You are going away, then?" she managed to say.

"Yes, oh, yes," he answered carelessly.

The shining draperies about her stirred. "Far?" came from her lips. She seemed speaking without volition of her own.

"As far as may be," he said with a reckless laugh. He had to keep to his part now; no playing the craven at that moment, though this was the hardest task he had ever set himself. She drew a little from him. A belated blossom fell and clung to her. He looked at the tiny trifle, it would cling in his memory.

"I'm sorry you found that key," he said with what seemed brusque, terrible bluntness. "But it was chronicled in the Book of Fate. Why did you not give me up?" She did not answer. "It would have been easier for me than this."

His hand went involuntarily to his brow; the last words had broken from his lips in a tone different from any she had ever heard from him before. She put her hand back of her and touched the stage tree. "Wouldn't it be better if I did just go now, without—"

"Oh, no," she said. Her voice was

very unlike her own; she did not seem herself at all to him, nor to herself.

"Ah, well!" He would have to go on to the end; did he not know he would be forced to do so when he came there that night? The play had been but the text, the keynote; the real drama came after the curtain was down. Without now, in front of the stage, the servants were beginning to clear away the little partitions of the boxes and squares for the dance that would follow. "Where shall I begin? That is the point," he observed with light helplessness. "It all seems so incomprehensible, so unexplainable, when one attempts to explain," he remarked. "I didn't know how extraordinarily difficult it would be. Of course you know I'm a thief?"

She shivered. Her lips were very uncertain. She seemed to try to speak, but could not; the cherry blossoms lay mockingly bright at her feet.

"I guess that's the best way to start," he said contemplatively. He looked at her now, but did not seem to see her; some vista, far beyond, engrossed his look. "A plain Dick Turpin, Robert Macaire, Jack Sheppard or any of that ilk, if you please. *Voilà!* So much established, one can go on—or rather go backward!" he laughed. He did not spare himself now.

"It began far up one of the rivers of China, where, even in these enlightened days, the genuine, old-fashioned pirate yet flourishes. The idea, I mean, began there, perhaps was unconsciously suggested by a certain old river pirate whose life I once happened to save. But that's another story; if you ever meet Senhor Cagliani again, which I doubt, he could tell you about it. This buccaneer of the yellow stream," he went on in ironical, scoffing accents, "was a terrible fellow. In times of famine, when thousands were dying and the Chinese merchants hoisted the price of rice to a prohibitive figure, this wicked corsair helped himself at the sword's point to all the cereal, and distributed it for nothing to the famished hordes. Primitive Socialism! There was something delightfully naïve about

it to me. I cherished a positive liking for the old marauder. Of course they got his head in the end; but when his spirit, like that of the man's in the poem, swung past the milky way to the realms of Pluto, I'll warrant there was no 'what someone else said,' 'what someone else did or thought,' as he met the dark master's queries. A law unto himself," he added musingly, "a personality!" He broke off with a laugh. "That seems about all," he remarked. "The rest becomes merely episodical and degenerates into mere vulgar details."

"You have always given away, then—And Mr. Page—those bonds—" She hardly knew what she was saying.

"Some time ago he foisted on a certain charity, as advisory member of the board, about fifty thousand dollars' worth of bad securities a certain little country bank had held." He spoke now in a tone somewhat languid. "The bank was his own; he arranged the transaction so that nothing could legally be done in the matter. It seemed like a good joke to make him, without knowing it, pay them back; that is all. Morrow and the rest—why speak of them? History but repeats itself in their cases. I thought the game worth the candle. The excitement was rather stimulating—but it has ceased to be so." He looked at her. "Good-bye, Miss Happy-for-a-Thousand-Years," he laughed.

Her lips moved slightly. "You are going away from New York?" She had asked something of the kind, she remembered, before.

"Tomorrow."

"Where are you going?" She stood like one lingering there after the climax.

He made a vague gesture. She seemed trying to think of something further to say, but no words came to her. A moment he looked at her in the shining, lustrous robe, a beautiful sheath for the slender, beautiful form. He could not see her eyes; the lashes hid them from him. "Happy-for-a-Thousand-Years!" How the words vibrated through her! Beneath her throat the violet-hued stuff suddenly

shimmered to her quick breath. Though the mist filled her eyes, something waved. A drapery? She felt the chill as it fell back into place, and looked before her. She stood alone. He had gone—gone! No, there was a footstep without; he was coming back. The orchestra began suddenly to play—the waltz, the Viennese waltz they had danced together ages ago! A hand was at the curtain. If he came in now—Madness! Glamour! “Happy-for-a-Thous—” She heard a voice, a man's voice.

“I was wondering where I should find you.” It was Sir Archibald!

XXII

A LITTLE shop in a street of colonnades at the foot of a great hill overlooking a big port, gateway to, or from, a magic domain, whose somnolent millions are just beginning to raise their sleepy heads. On the waters of the big port the smaller native boats bob around like bees busy in a garden. The brown junks lie still in droves, and only the occasional typhoon can stir them to general activity and excitement. Occupying the more open spaces, the ships from the western countries swing with an air of grave solidity at their anchorage. Dark specks clamber up the sides of several of them from the coal lighters around. Big vessels continue to arrive; others go. Always animation, life in the shadow of the great hills that stand like guardian sentinels of the strange land beyond.

The man in the little shop is absorbed in a paper from home—America; he had read the latest news of graft, politics, and scandal, and is about to turn to the page devoted to sermons, when his gaze is arrested by a headline: “The Goldberg pearls. Mysteriously returned, after more than four years.”

The fine straight eyes lift from the sheet. The man's expression is one of ironical disapproval of modern enterprising newspaper methods; then, suppressing a yawn, he sits with a contemplative look on his slightly whimsi-

cal, clean-cut features. It is only in moments like these, of perfect repose and easy poise, that the man on the little stool in the doorway appears any older than he who enacted the role of the beggar prince in the old classic play of the Shoguns. Has he ever thought of that occasion since? His eyes, somewhat graver, though filled with a lively interest in all things that have life, follow the multitude, brown, yellow, white. The bare feet of the riksha boys patter, patter. There's a rhythm in the sound; it soothes, lulls. A Chinaman, with a visage suggestive of the inherited calm of generations of tranquil ancestors, moves silently about amid the rarest of silks and priests' robes, vases and other superb ancient art pieces. A shop? Rather a tiny museum, a room full of delight and treasures.

The Chinaman dusts and rubs. He never drops anything; his days are an exemplification of existence without emotions or accidents. The man in the doorway now turns lazily to regard him. Patter, patter, the feet without go on incessantly. Click, click—life surges through the narrow street. The man hears the sound of the stream, though he no longer sees it; his gaze, half contemplative, half inquiring, continues fastened on the Oriental.

“Let me see, Ting's Elder Brother, how long is it since we have been partners?”

“Nearly ten years.”

“And in that time we have amassed a few pretty pennies?”

The Chinaman imperturbably mentioned an amount.

“Quite a princely fortune!” commented the man on the stool. “The people of your country are ideal business partners,” he laughed. “One puts a little money with them, and it grows like a snowball you haven't even helped roll along.”

“The collection of vases and other articles the master left before he went to the New World were very fine,” said the other in the smoothest dialect of Canton.

"They must have been," was the lazy reply, "since you got nearly one hundred thousand dollars for purchases made by me for a few hundred dollars on one of my exploring expeditions into the interior. Truly art thou a prince of merchants, and a lucky day was it for me when I established you here. An excellent contract of mine, that of equal profits for setting you up! And the joke of it is," laughed the man on the stool, "I really thought I was doing you a favor, that never a dollar that went into the venture would ever come out again. I really forgot all about you and the little shop until one day in New York"—his face graver—"a letter came saying something about good business in China."

"It is I and my brothers who owe much to the master," said the Oriental musically. "Did he not save—"

"Your honorable and illustrious father, the benevolent pirate! True. Heigho!" he yawned, rising. "The sleeping partner, having become opulent, is also once more getting restless. The little stool in a front door, though a charming post of vantage, offers not sufficient scope for his fevered brain."

"The master has only been back from one of his journeys about a week."

"A week? It has seemed a year."

"Well," sententiously, "if the master must go so soon again, in the town of Tei-to, near the borders of Tibet, there is, I have heard, an honorable family who have had for many generations three ancient vases—"

"Which if you got, you could set your own price on for some barbarian American? Good! My countrymen must have works of art. And to get these there may be offered an adventure. Besides—" He stopped, thinking of a delicate secret service then engrossing him, work he had taken upon himself through motives of patriotism for his government at Washington. A unique, silent figure, Chatfield Bruce went here, there, everywhere, ostensibly to procure valuable curios, but more especially on confidential business pertaining to the awakening and the future of this vast empire.

The powers at home were curious; they wanted to know much and to do a great deal. Disdaining compensation for his services, Bruce had mixed somewhat in the game between nations, never outwardly, but secretly, with true Oriental subtlety. He understood these people, liked and trusted them, and they knew him.

The wanderlust for the wastes and the deserts and the walled cities was on him again; the big port, half Europeanized, had begun to pall on his fancy.

He took up the newspaper again, paltry items, that told him only of what he already knew, sundry, unexplainable repayments to Goldberg, Morrow, Page and others. *Vis comical!* Instead of Morrow, for example, returning to the widows and orphans what that eminently respectable gentleman and pillar of society had stolen through his big asphalt swindle, it had been he, Bruce, after all, who had made restitution from his own pocket-book. An ironical turn of fortune! How Morrow, *et al.*, would have a right to rub their hands complacently if they only knew the details! Travesty—burlesque—farce! His poor socialistic theories—had he ever really believed in them—the end justifying the means? Or had the sardonic jest of it all, the risks, the mad excitement, appealed to an odd, seemingly untamable substratum in his nature?

"Well, I'll go now and pack the little bag," Bruce murmured at length, absently. Life, after all, was mostly made up of packing and unpacking a grip.

"Can Ting's Elder Brother do anything more?" asked the Chinaman.

The young man paused in the doorway, his figure outlined against the sunlight on the pavement of the colonnade. "Not unless you are really a necromancer as well as a magic merchant," he answered facetiously.

"And if so—what want?" said the other, relapsing into pidgin English.

"Nothing much or very unreasonable," laughed Bruce. "You might bring me to the sleeping princess; the way the genii did in the Arabian fairy

tale. What was her name—Badoura? She lived in some remote part of China."

"Plenty other princess right here," suggested the Chinaman insinuatingly.

"Why, so there are!" And Chatfield Bruce walked out.

As he made his way along the cool colonnade, a few of those other princesses Ting's Elder Brother had in mind looked shyly out of the corners of their eyes at the graceful, tall figure, clad in the light, immaculate garments; but Chatfield Bruce, with head well up, seemed now only to gaze over the heads of the passers-by, princesses and all! At a corner he turned and walked down a block or two, to gaze out at the shipping.

He asked one of the agents in front of an office on the harbor front what boats had come in. The man told him the names of two or three liners that had just dropped anchor.

"That's the *Cynthia* over there, from Bombay," added the informant, indicating with a finger. Bruce glanced; there was nothing very especial about the *Cynthia* to attract attention, and he stepped quickly on. He was in a mood for action. He did not take the inclined railroad to his house and garden, several hundred feet up on the hillside, but climbed briskly thither, while restless, mercurial thoughts ran through his brain. Was it only that the wandering spirit had again bitten him? He passed his hand lightly across his brow and threw back his shoulders. Vaporous vagaries; he would have no more to do with them; he would think only of the practical concerns of the hour.

Bruce's small grip was soon packed, and leaving a few last directions with his English butler, the young man set forth for the inland journey—that would lead him where? He neither knew nor cared.

He had scarcely left his house out of sight behind, when at one of the abrupt turns in his way leading down someone unexpectedly advanced to speak to him, a young lady who had been pausing indecisively near a flowering space whence several paths diverged.

"I beg your pardon, but would you kindly direct—" She broke off. "Mr. Bruce!"

Very pale, he bowed. There was a momentary silence.

"When did you arrive?" he asked at length. He did not call her "Miss Wood"; she was probably now—

"This morning," she said "on the *Cynthia*."

Again that silence. It was broken, at last, by him. "You were about to ask the way to—"

"Yes." Her eyes were strangely bright; she mentioned the desired destination mechanically.

He indicated a path. "Three to the right, two to the left!" He managed to speak now in matter-of-fact tones. He saw her figure straighten; she was annoyed by the encounter! Annoyed—the word sang in his brain. Annoyed—of course, naturally! What else should he expect? But he had to say something.

"It's odd to meet again like this!" he went on. "But, after all, the world is small." He uttered the platitude as lightly as he could; it gapped an interval.

"Yes," she said. He told himself he was detaining her, yet he clumsily stayed a moment longer. He, Chatfield Bruce, clumsy! The immovable Buddha himself might have laughed!

"You had a good voyage?"

"Oh, yes!"

Was there anything further to add or to do? He lifted his hat.

"You should have no difficulty in finding it—your way, I mean." He turned to go. She started to speak—to tell him she had heard all—of the mysterious restorations to Morrow and the others—would have uttered she knew not what words—his name, certainly; she did speak that. But the cars of the incline nearby rushed down at that moment, swallowing up the words with its harsh, metallic rattle and rumble and she stood alone looking down the path he had gone.

At the wharf Bruce learned that the scheduled hour for the boat's leaving had been changed at the last moment;

it would not go until the next morning. He hardly listened to the explanations for this sudden alteration in the time for departure; the circumstance alone was of moment to him; he found himself doomed to remain yet a while in the big port, twelve hours or more.

A burning impatience consumed him. What should he do with himself until morning?

In an unexplainable state of mind he sauntered on, and without any special motive got into one of the cars of the inclined railroad. He got out mechanically at the last stop, and climbed until he at last could go no higher.

The world lay at his feet, superb, wonderful—beautiful green and sparkling blue—sward and sea, neither lovelier than the other, and overhead the dreamy azure, unbroken by even a feather of a cloud. He sat down on the grass, then lay back and looked at the sky.

An hour, two hours passed. The sun began to dip in gorgeous triumph toward the horizon. Suddenly he sat up and listened.

"I don't think I'll climb any higher, my dear. In fact, I believe I'll go back to the Cliff House, nearby. It's been a strenuous day, and a rest on the balcony before dinner rather appeals to me."

The voice, a man's, came from below. An outjutting granite rock at Bruce's feet concealed the speaker—a woman, who answered:

"Very well; I'll return with you."

"No, no, my dear." Mr. Wood's tones were again heard in gentle remonstrance. "Go on up to the top, if you wish; it's perfectly safe, I'm told."

"You don't really mind, then?"

"Not a bit. Only, while you're about it, I'll be making my way leisurely toward one of those veranda chairs at the hotel," he laughed. "A little touch of the rheumatism, you understand, my dear. I'm not the climber I used to be."

The retreating footsteps died away; a hush, deathlike, seemed to embrace the world. Suddenly a pebble dropped—another. Bruce turned his eyes and

for the second time that day saw her, now as a part of a roseate miracle, with the swift, mantling flush tinting her cheek. Her eyes looked out upon him, startled, surprised—and glad, yes, glad!

What did it mean? Her white hand was trembling on the black rock. She had met him, after what seemed so many years, again a few moments before, that day, only to see him go away once more, this time forever, she was certain. Forever! The word had been leaping in her heart; every beat had been attuned to it, and now—

The flames of light played between, around them, and struck her fairly. And his gaze, which he had forced to be conventional when he had encountered her before, now lingered absorbingly on her, a part of the picture, merging into it, making the world super-radiant. Lovers' madness? Perhaps. But, ah, the years had been kind to her, caressing her with soft, curving lines, lending depth, wondrous depth, to the blue eyes. Who spoke first? Did he go to her, or she to him? The black months seemed to fall from his shoulders, all restlessness to take wings. The flames now played on them as one.

"And Sir Archibald?"

"Returned to India long ago."

"You did not see him there?"

"No."

"And yet he is not one lightly to resign. A man would fight hard for you"—he smiled—"not give you up easily."

"Did you, sir, not give me up easily, as you call it, that night of the Japanese play?"

"I—easily!"

"And went away, a jest on your lips!"

"A jest?" He looked up at her; she sat on a great rock, he at her feet. "I did not feel in a jesting mood."

"And today on the path"—her lips were slightly tremulous—"confess, you were somewhat cavalier—"

"Ah, I did not know then," with a glad laugh, "what your eyes have since told me!"

"My eyes told *you*?"

"A moment ago—here."

"You mean I told you *first* that I—"

"Shall we say, we told each other simultaneously?"

The purple lights began to glow on the summit.

"You were going away again today, when I met you?"

"But didn't!" he answered. "The boat's schedule was changed; she leaves tomorrow early."

"And you go then, of course?"

He got up and looked down at her. Behind, the sun dipped; the radiance grew. "Shall I?"

She did not speak.

"Shall I?" he repeated, mindful only of the glory of her eyes, the wonder of her face.

She answered, but not in words.

"Marjorie!" He took her in his arms, held her from all the world. A

thousand swords flared up from the horizon as he bent over and kissed lips sweet as Aurora's!

Aurora's! The Dawn, magic symbol, suggestive of the *open sesame* of life! He had found it—at last. Triumphantly the knowledge surged through him. She was his "dawn," with her eyes the wonderful blue of the sky. His lips swept over them, too; he forgot the world; it lay below like the figment of a dream. The past—all its problems—had gone and were buried forever. Not long before, that very day, the routine he had stepped into had seemed anomalous; he had vaguely scoffed at himself. Now it had been suddenly illumined, tinged with the beautiful, the marvelous, as though a miracle had happened.

The world receded more and more; the stars came out, and in their glad light, they, very glad, went down together.



SAKURA

By FUJI-KO

O'ER Fujiyama's silent crest
A young moon's swinging in the west.
The *semi*'s song is clear and low;
Faint, vagrant breezes come and go,
And sway the lovely iris—slim,
Purple and white, in bowers dim.

O firefly, guide Sakura's feet!
O night wind, tell my message sweet!
O Benten-Sama, guard her way!
O *semi*, sing to her, I pray!

The pine tree sighs of deathless love—
Flamingo's wing, and wing of dove,
Passion's red rose, and virtue's snow.
Sing to her, *semi*; she will know!

"NOT AT ALL"

By STANLEY OLMS TED

THE Prima Donna pursed her lips of scarlet. They were redder than any silken strand. Otherwise her face was pale. She wore a moon-colored gown, which heightened the sense she imparted of shedding her own luster. And so, the room being dimly lighted, the electric bulbs thickly veiled in mauve in key with the blue flame of gas logs, she was a predominant luminousness.

In the hotel lobby, eight floors below, the Poet moved about among the restless idlers, chafing and out of harmony with himself. His opportunity was at hand, one way or another. Decision was his difficulty. Decision is always a difficulty—when one is a poet.

Now, of her own free will and accord, the Prima Donna had set the hour of five for the Poet's call. Promptly at five, accordingly, the Poet had written his name on a slip of paper and presented it to the hotel clerk. Something in the routined dubious glance of this official had led the Poet into awkward superfluousness:

"By appointment. I'm—I'm expected."

For reply the hotel clerk had turned to pass the slip into some mysterious inner cabinet with great tubes suggesting oppressive pneumatic processes.

After perhaps ten minutes' wait, the complicated feat of getting some knowledge of the Poet's punctual arrival to the Prima Donna appeared to be accomplished. He was told that the Prima Donna would see him at five-thirty. He was also told that she would send down word when he should come up.

It was now five thirty-five. For the

past twenty-five minutes—since the delivery of the Prima Donna's message—one conviction had obsessed the Poet. One conviction had disentangled itself from his bewilderment, to stare him in the face mockingly, he thought, knowing himself so fettered against it. It urged him—this conviction—yet he was powerless to follow. As one bound hand and foot, he recognized its wisdom, saw how it proposed an ultimate test of himself, saw, too, wherein he would fail to meet that test.

Thus ran his conviction:

"I have come at the hour appointed, selected by this girl herself, apparently after her mature deliberation, and following two postponements. I have as little real reason for longing to speak with her, to touch her hand, as she has apparent eagerness to permit the favor. Any normal egoistic valuation, the mere equivalent of self-respect, demands that I excuse myself in turn, that I send my courteous regrets for five-thirty, as an impossible hour. I ought to send my regrets—through that pneumatic tube—and go my way."

Perhaps she expected him to do so. Possibly that was her method of applying some sort of estimate. Possibly he would gain more than he could lose through instantaneous, unequivocal surrender of this little thing which he had desired above so many greater things. That side of it began to look more and more probable as he mentally revolved it. She was seeing what sort of stuff he was made of. He was being given his chance. Just so surely as he waited, darkling, he saw the demand that he await no longer. And yet—might not such a course appear peevish, resent-

ful? By no means! He could send his excuse with dignity, hers being the fault. There would be nothing rude about such an act, though by its inner significance it would rather preclude the possibility of any meeting in the future. At this supreme little moment, independence only could make him whole in his own eyes. But independence would involve consistent renunciation for unsolved days to come. Indeed, the real test lay therein. Conviction doubled upon itself.

Thus the Poet wound, chafing, in and out among the guests in the hotel corridor. All the joy of the prospective meeting had left him. He felt weak-willed, supine, inert, irritated. Yet he kept well within signal of the desk, ready to catch on the instant the eye of the groomed clerk, whose manner was of that superlative metropolitan impersonalism just on the borderland of suspicion—the virtuous manner, apparently, for an employee of any great hostelry in Manhattan.

At five-fifty, by the circular marble clock, which had lost no countenance through the Poet's staring, the hotel clerk raised his unspeakably cool eyes and nodded almost imperceptibly, beckoning the Poet. The Prima Donna had sent down word that the Poet might be hoisted to a given number on the eighth floor, where she would see him.

She came forward confidently, offered her hand and called him by name.

"You must not think me rude," she said, "that I kept you waiting."

"Not at all," stammered the Poet rather ungraciously, with a supreme conscientiousness for how he lied.

The lavender-lighted room was icy cold, the month being January. The Prima Donna explained that she allowed no steam in her apartment. "This American way of heating is simply preposterous," she said, "and ruinous to the voice."

She paused to draw a silver-shot, moon-colored scarf more closely about her bare shoulder, then fell daintily on her knees before her hearth.

"This," she said, referring to the gas log, "appears to be a very nice arrange-

ment, which keeps you just warm enough without stifling you. But it is undeniably smelly. I'm going to turn it down a little, if you don't mind."

The Poet shivered. "Not at all," he said, with another shudder at his prevarication.

They sat together before the low flicker. Her face was a dusk-hallowed milkiness against the oval backing of a satin and gold chair. She was perhaps waiting for the Poet to explain himself.

By way of assisting him, she assured him that she looked forward with interest to reading something he had written—some day. "It was so nice of you," she said, "to send me your book. I have been so wrought upon by their disagreements, factions, and entanglements this year that I won't allow myself even to think, much less read anything. Opera in New York is—" Lacking the proper word, the Prima Donna raised her eyes heavenward. "But I sent your poems to a great-aunt of mine in Schenectady who's just a dear, and awfully literary. I knew she would appreciate them. You don't mind, do you?"

"Why—er—not at all," replied the Poet, and choked silently.

"There comes a time, you know," pursued the singer, "when a woman doing the sort of thing I have to do has but one desire—to forget everything, everybody. I try to do that. People say to me: 'Have you read this book?' 'Have you heard that symphony?' and I am almost irritated. I have wished to forget that there is a book or a symphony. I have wished to close my eyes."

The Prima Donna suited the action to the word. The Poet sought an appropriate word for the action. Here was an opportunity, and he writhed at missing it. Not one of the possible phrases rushing upon him but lacked the exacted subtlety! The Prima Donna resumed her monologue:

"So I just do nothing—as far as I can. I drive with mamma through the hours of the afternoon. I tell the chauffeur merely to keep going; I close my eyes; I try to forget. Evenings, when they

know I'm not working, not at the Opera, people come to see me—privileged persons, friends. I cannot see them. Mamma sends down word I cannot see them. They go away. They get angry. What is one to do? It is very horrid of me, isn't it?"

"Not at all," said the Poet, with eager if reticent sympathy.

The Prima Donna gave herself over to meditation. At length, with a supreme effort, she interrupted her delicate lethargy, clutched the silver-shot scarf and sat more erect, as one gracefully at odds with a gentle coma.

"And my 'Manon,'" she said, harking back to something preliminary to her personal audience with the Poet. "How well you seemed to understand my 'Manon'! It was good of you to write what you did about it—"

"Oh," enthused the Poet, glowing out from his icy chill, "not at all—by no means, really—"

"Ah, you would tell me your impressions of my 'Manon' were inevitable. But they were not. I had thought they must be, but so many failed to see her as I wished to make them see her! No one had ever seen her right; and when finally I had thought her out, they were not prepared—they did not know. You seemed, however, to get an inkling. Ah, it is pleasant, when you find that person—just that person with the inkling. You are satisfied with that. Now there is my 'Nedda.' 'Nedda,' you know, is generally conceived as temperamental, but it is never the right kind of temperament. There is something in 'Nedda's' temperament, you see, which nullifies the temperamental interpretation until you've, so to speak, gone to the bottom with her, and then arisen to the top and then caught the *thing*, the *Nedda-ness*—you follow what I mean?"

"Not at all," murmured the dazed Poet from the winding maze of an uttermost hypnotism. "I mean," he stammered, "I do understand—how I understand!"

The Poet felt a positively divine exhilaration of relief. He was doing so much better.

"It is just the thing they had never found in 'Nedda,' that they had never found in 'Juliet,'" she went on. "I saw that I must find it. And when I found it, and gave it to them, they were very nice, and applauded me with cheers, but I could see, I could feel, rather, they had not seen. That is our tragedy! The applause comes—they exalt us—they throw their laurel wreaths, strew roses for our feet, take the horses from our carriage, and yet they have not seen what we would have them see. We have given it to them, but they cannot. There is our tragedy."

The Poet shook his head, responsive to the dark picture she painted.

"And thus—'Marguerite'!" exclaimed the Prima Donna. "Ah, poor little 'Marguerite'—how they murder her—misrepresenting, caricaturing, almost defaming! And it's the same story! You show the world the right 'Marguerite,' the true 'Marguerite,' the only conceivable woman, with the mingled coquetry and passion and innocence. They seem grateful. They storm the rafters for you, perhaps. But you know they have missed the subtle, elusive heart of the thing you have done. Ah, me! Nothing can even things out for that—for us. We must endure silently. That is why we try to forget, why we close our eyes and would see no one. We earn our aloofness."

The Prima Donna talked well. Granted a potentially intelligent listener, she enjoyed analysis of her work and of the inhibitive sorrows connected with her life. The onyx and gold clock ticking on the mantel struck a single silver chime, disclosing the hour as six-thirty. The Prima Donna started up.

"Dear me, I'd no idea it was 'so late.' Mamma and I, you see, are martyring ourselves this evening dining with the Van Koops—really not so bad as some, I suppose, since they are a very old family, and very cultured and very rich, yet—" The Prima Donna paused to smile and hold forth helpless hands. "You see the sort of thing we must sometimes endure despite ourselves! Now you won't think me very horrid for

being compelled to dismiss you, just in the midst of our conversation—at its zenith, so to speak—will you? Another time, you know—”

But the Poet had broken in, very gratefully.

“Not at all,” he assured her.

“And you don’t mind mamma’s not coming out? I was so anxious she should meet you, but she—”

“Oh, not at all,” again interrupted the Poet, hat in hand.

“I do hope your address is on the name you sent up,” proceeded the Prima Donna in the rounding out of farewell. “When my aunt comes up from Schenectady she’ll probably be quite wild to meet you—you, the poet, the author of the book I sent her. Perhaps, even, you might prove a friend in need and take her around a bit. She’s a little old-fashioned—lived all her life in the country, you know—but such a dear! Would you mind now? Because, if you wouldn’t, I’m going to let you know.”

“Oh, not at all,” exalted the elate Poet, realizing this distinction of conferred intimacy, realizing also, on the instant, that he was already shut out in the guarded hotel corridor, where a barricading desk, held by a duenna, forbade any way forth from the elevator or up the stairway save across a straight fire of cross-examination in the third degree.

But the Poet was making his exit and not his entrance. He was a person of no particular importance, who had merely produced in turn two novels, a play in blank verse, and a book of lyrics, all of which had been published by men who feared they saw in them something too like real literature to foster hope of pecuniary return, but who, for some reason, had taken the odds—and lost out.

Nor is it to be supposed that the Poet’s right of access to the Prima Donna across the polar clerk, the pneumatic tubes, the barricading desk

on the eighth floor and the duenna behind it, had been vested in such nothings. He had been accorded his privilege solely as the author of an operatic “story” which had been so fortunate as to get itself sold to a daily paper—for its Sunday edition—and in this story the Prima Donna’s “Manon” had claimed especial attention.

The Poet was a sun treader homeward, though the gusty night was on. Long golden lines spun themselves like filaments from his mind as he pictured the Prima Donna, with her moon-colored gown, her silver-shot scarf, her lips redder than the ready-to-hand poetic strand of scripture, pictured her in the lavender, bolting-sheeted light, before the azure gas flame, in her freezing setting of the adopted Continental temperature, dissipating the chill with melodic, musical felicity of speech.

His reminiscence, following each word she had uttered, halted at the silvery chime of the onyx clock. Someone had slapped him on the shoulder.

“Well, brother, how is it? Did you get her this time?”

It was only Toddy Lumpson, reporter of the paper which had published the Poet’s story of the Prima Donna’s “Manon,” and Toddy was breathless, because he had walked very fast to catch up with the Poet.

“Saw her this time, then,” pursued Toddy, following the reply. “Good! I suppose she’s just as freaky and stuck on herself as they all are. They are such a bunch—those Metropolitan starlights!”

“Not at all,” warmly defended the Poet, restraining his resentment, as beffited his exaltation. “She’s a dear, interesting, superlative genius of a girl—beautiful as dawn, or twilight, fluent as—”

“Whew!” whistled the reporter. “You’ve gone clean dippy over her, that’s evident!”

“You don’t understand,” insisted the Poet. “Not at all!”



THE PROPER THING

By CLAYTON HAMILTON

"**M**Y dear," said Ripley Cortwright, lifting his eyebrows over the edge of the evening paper, which, according to settled custom, had been brought him with his cigarettes and coffee, "I have been thinking about that little birthday party of yours tomorrow evening."

Janet looked up at him with sudden kindliness over the light enticing crystal of the dessert service. But his eyebrows were lowered again as he glanced down the latest figures of the market, and his baldish forehead chilled her. "I was afraid you had forgotten the date," she sighed.

"Yes?" He smiled his inscrutable smile.

"You have said so little about it lately."

"I have heard it suggested in the Street that I owe my fortune—*our* fortune, my dear—to my habit of saying little." He folded the paper, and the slow smile widened over his face. "But I think of things much more than you suspect. Tomorrow afternoon a new electric brougham will be driven to our doorway. I hope you will like the cushions; they are my own idea."

Her heart leaped up at the mere sense that he had not forgotten, after all. She did not wait to realize the greatness of the gift. In a trice she was beside him, oblivious of everything except the sudden warmth within her. With the frank joy of a child, she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

"There—that will do, my dear. I didn't ask for gratitude."

Repulsed, she unlocked her lovely arms. The glow faded from her as she rounded the dinner table. She sank

into her chair, remembering. "Why did you spoil it all?" she sighed.

"Let us be reasonable, my dear," her husband answered. "In our position I could scarcely give you less than an electric brougham. You had every reason to expect that I would do the proper thing. The proper thing does not require thanks." He drawled it all drily, till his lips closed with a smile.

Janet looked about in desolation. Her mind flitted to the many women who envied the magnificence of the Cortwright dining room. Its mirrored silver and iridescent glass shone upon her with the brilliancy of keen ice.

"I wasn't thinking of the matter of propriety," she said. "I thought"—her voice broke—"I thought there was a spirit in the giving."

"There was. My wife shall always have the best."

"The best," Janet murmured, echoing. Then she added sadly: "Once a dusty-faced little girl in the Settlement gave me a bedraggled geranium. I kissed her for the light in her eyes. She was glad that I kissed her. I have the flower still."

She looked around the little table with a pang. There were no chairs for children in the Cortwright dining room.

Her husband lighted a cigarette. "Thirty-two tomorrow," he mused aloud. "You were scarcely twenty-five when we began life in a downtown apartment house. Cortwright & Company were new to the Street. Seven years! We are now upon Riverside Drive." The smooth smile told her that he did not ask for gratitude.

"We have climbed," she said. Her voice was not bitter; it was dull.

THE SMART SET

He heard the dullness. "Do you know why?" he asked her between puffs. "You spoke of spirit. Well, my spirit has been to do the proper thing by my wife. You think I haven't sentiment? Perhaps you're right—I don't treasure faded flowers. But I wonder where we'd be now if I did? There are different kinds of husbands. Some dawdle and keep up the farce of honeymooning through the years. Others work—to give their wives the best. *I cornered cotton.* That's why I have a nervous heart."

He caught her mother instinct by this move. "What did Dr. Rogers say yesterday?" she asked with true solicitude.

"The old prescription—freedom from excitement."

"You shouldn't work so hard, Ripley—not now. Must you really go downtown so often in the evening?"

He looked at her without appearing to, but there was nothing in her eyes.

"Don't you think that we have climbed enough?"

He allowed himself to frown.

"Don't think I don't appreciate it all," his wife continued—"all that you have done to win us the position that we hold. But"—she interlaced her slender, jeweled fingers and leaned her chin upon them—"weren't there some things about that first apartment—" Her sad young eyes looked longingly at the smug, hard face that met them. "You used to love to have me kiss you then. And oftentimes your arms were strong around me."

It was part of his pride to resist appeals to sentiment. "I was thirty then," he said. "I am nearly forty now. Let us be reasonable. One's way of loving alters with the years."

"I am only thirty-two," she answered softly.

Ripley lighted another cigarette and smoked it for a while.

"The cushions were my own idea," he said. "You know I pride myself upon my sense of color."

"I suppose they are the proper thing," Janet murmured sadly, more to herself than to her husband.

He affected not to hear her. He be-

gan again, unflattered, between puffs. "We were speaking of your party tomorrow evening," he said. "Is that sculptor fellow coming?"

She felt his hard eyes cold upon her. "No," she answered.

"You asked him?"

"Yes."

"Why isn't he coming, then?"

"He sails for Italy tomorrow morning."

"Indeed!" He blew a cloud of smoke.

"For Italy—so soon?"

Janet ventured nothing.

"And that Mrs. Merrygrue—"

"She has accepted."

"I must ask you to recall the invitation."

She looked up swiftly. "Ripley! What do you mean?"

"What I said. I have my reasons; I always have."

"Think how it would look!"

"That's just what I have been thinking of, my dear. The Graham Rudyards were the first to cut her. We owe it to ourselves to be the second."

"I do not understand you," she said firmly.

"Must I explain? Everyone remembers the circumstances of her husband's death."

"He shot himself. It was just after you had cornered cotton."

"He had lost money," said Ripley carelessly. "Such things happen. I know he didn't leave her anything."

"Well?"

"Well—she dresses now much better than she did before he died."

"What of that?"

"My dear, don't play the child. People are talking. We are, I pride myself, respectable. We cannot afford to hazard our social position by giving the woman countenance."

"Aren't you rather hard, Ripley?" asked his wife.

"This is not a mere suspicion; I have evidence. Besides"—his face lighted with a sinister flare—"I have other reasons."

"Others?"

"Which I do not choose to tell you just at present."

Janet had no special liking for little Fanny Merrygrue; but her heart swung to the defense of a woman at bay. "She chaperoned me for two months at the studio," she said. "And you ask me now to turn her from my door?"

"I admit that she was useful," said her husband, unaffected. "You could hardly have found a respectable woman to dawdle around that sculptor's habitation all the time that he was dabbling you in clay. But our house is not a studio. I meet men in business that I do not ask to dinner. I expect of you a similar discretion."

"Poor little Fanny!" Janet murmured, though she did not like the woman.

"I must ask you not to sentimentalize," said Ripley. "Let us be reasonable. Are we respectable, or are we not?"

"She was at the Wades' the other evening."

Ripley frowned. "I saw her then—for the last time." He brought his hand down hard upon the table. "You will write a note to her at once."

Janet looked upon him mildly. "Suppose you hadn't—suppose we hadn't—cornered cotton?" she said with gentle firmness.

He had no answer.

"I will write to her," said Janet, rising. But she did not speak like one who had been conquered.

At the little mahogany writing desk in the rich library of the mansion on Riverside Drive Janet Cortwright wrote a note to the little woman whose husband had failed to break the corner in cotton. Her heart was heavy with pity. She sought subterfuges, to explain what could not be explained. At first she had not understood, she said, that Mr. Cortwright intended the party for his own special set—men and women in that moneyed class that Fanny found so wearisome. She herself had wanted some blithe spirits from Bohemia. She had asked Giulio, but he was to sail too soon. She had asked Fanny, but now she feared that Fanny would find herself out of place among the straight-backed Pillars of Society.

She would prefer to lunch with Fanny alone some afternoon next week and talk over their studio days together.

The "Yours faithfully" woke an aching laugh within her, which she stifled as she felt her husband's entrance.

He glanced over her shoulder. "You might have spared some serpentine evasions," he suggested.

"I am doing this because you want me to," she answered. "I think you ought to thank me for that, without objecting to my way of doing it."

"The proper thing does not require thanks," said Ripley. He was proud of this Principle of Life. "As for the manner, I cannot see the charity of slushing. In defense of respectability it behooves us to be stern."

She seized the note with a twist of the fingers that suggested tearing it to tatters. He knew the thing to do. "I shall send it by messenger," he said, and took it from her.

After a few moments Ripley returned to the library. "There, that is over," he said. "I am glad you did not choose to be annoying."

She had been thinking in his absence. "Aren't you going to thank me, Ripley?" she asked.

The inscrutable smile made her fear a repetition of his Principle of Life; but he varied the formula, to humor her. "Our course was plain. It was our duty to live up to our position."

"I understood your attitude," Janet answered. "That is why I wrote the letter."

"Then there is nothing more to say." He turned to go.

"Be patient, Ripley. There is a little more. When you told me of your birthday gift this evening my heart was thankful to you. Well"—she spoke now in a slow, soft voice—"I have just given you a greater gift."

His face showed her that he did not understand.

"If little Fanny Merrygrue has any feelings," his wife continued, "that note of mine will break her heart. I have laid a sin upon my soul. I have done this as a sacrifice to your sense of

our respectability. That is my gift to you."

All that Ripley felt was that she had seized a subtle chance to play the martyr.

"You did not want my thanks for your remembrance," Janet said. Then she added, thinking of his formula, "I understood the reason." There was a little pause; then piteously she drew nearer to him. "But I am a woman, Ripley. My gift—" Her voice gave way, and she looked into his face with the sad eyes of a child. "Don't you care?" she murmured.

He felt this as an appeal to his sense of the proper thing. He drew her close and kissed her. Then he left the room.

Janet wandered to her own boudoir as a little waif might wander home to come out of the cold. Dimly she felt that the aloofness of her sanctuary would make her loneliness less lonely. As she closed the door behind her, her tall cheval glass reflected the superb, large, queenly mold of her, crowned with a glory of amber-colored hair that floated wide from the high forehead, broad-based upon the arches of her large, serene, dark eyes. But she did not glance into the mirror. She sat down in a chair that once had been her mother's, and rocked herself very quietly. She did not weep.

She was now grown stubborn to endure. Yet once, years before, she had looked into that mirror and had wept. When Ripley's love of her had died, she had come to the mirror with that question the most piteous that a woman ever asks: "Am I then no longer lovely?" and the mirror had glowed back, eloquent in reproach of him whose heart had somehow ceased to feel. She had looked for many nights at that reproach reflected lifelike. She had wept for many nights. But now she wept no more.

For in that tragic time, now five years back, she had fought and won a mighty victory. Heartsick with asking that one question of her mirror, she had turned her gaze inward and asked other questions of her soul. The vic-

tory was that she had won an answer to them. One of the questions she had asked was this: "With a heart so full of love to give to Love commanding it, must I not die, now that Love has abdicated his high power to command?" And she had won the answer: "Death comes, not through lack of love, but only through lack of understanding."

Then greatly she had striven to understand. And light had come to her, such light as kills, and, killing, resurrects. Her husband's altered attitude had come coincident with his first remarkable successes in the Street. She had been wise to see that love, which is so nearly everything to women, is only one of many things to men. Her husband gave himself to winning wealth and high position. Why? In order that he might enthroned and crown her. If he sacrificed his tenderness for this, it was for her he sacrificed it. And if her heart cried out against the sacrifice, did not her heart show lack of understanding? She had seized on this as the wisest interpretation of his attitude, and had flung it at her mirror in reproach of its reproach of him.

Again, she had been wise to feel that a man's love is a keen flame, flaring high but self-consuming, not a low, slow, constant fire like a woman's. When Ripley's love for her had died, she had striven to draw solace from his pride in her. Heroically she had tried to think that what had seemed a death had only been a transubstantiation. And if he was proud of her only as a chattel he possessed, was there not still true homage in his pride? She knew that he thought her the most beautiful of women. Her heart cried out with longing that he should *feel* her so, not *think* her. But if thinking was his way, ought she not to value the only worship he could give her, regardless of its kind? Thus she had conquered herself into an acceptance of his new position in regard to her. Her greatness had been to idealize his attitude. Her heroism had been to accept it, against the dictates of her heart. With this heroism she had

stunned her soul asleep—and saved it.

For from that hour she had wept no more. Year after year he had grown more cruelly absorbed in that big ambition of his, which was all for his wife and yet which drew him ever farther from the woman that she was. Year after year he had grown more cold and hard, more tragically cruel in the little things of life. But Janet was heroic. Having given up herself to live his life and not her own, she had yielded to him step by step and yearly grown the stronger through her yielding. Even when he had descended to the saturnine sardonic, she had not flinched; she had only gone down to the Settlement, to give away her heart in little pieces. Thus entrenched in giving, she had kept herself strong to stanch the cry for tenderness.

But lately—but now—Deep was her trouble as she rocked herself quietly in her chair turned slantwise from the mirror. This evening she had yielded once again. She needed now the strength that formerly had come to her through yielding; but, instead, she felt merely the pitiable weakness of her solitude. If only he had accepted that leap-up of her heart! If only—She felt his kiss still cold upon her cheek.

And now the trouble stirred more deeply. She tried to keep her eyes averted from the mirror. She felt the weakness of her dread to look. She turned. She saw the wide curve of her sloping shoulders.

Giulio—for two months he had spent his soul to set that curve beyond the reach of death. His bust of her—say rather his soul's dream of her in marble! Giulio—he thought those shoulders the most beautiful that he had ever seen. If only she could weep! Dark-eyed Giulio—Giulio of the memorable voice—sailing to Italy on the morrow, and she had not even said good-bye! Ah Ripley, Ripley! If only you knew all, would you understand and care?

There was a soft knocking at her door. She was looking in the mirror. The knocking was repeated. Very

slowly it withdrew her from the clamor of herself. She rose and spoke.

It was Marie who entered. "A gentleman to call, madame."

The card sent a quiver through Janet. "Say that—tell him that—ask him to wait, Marie. I shall be down in a quarter of an hour."

Mrs. Cortwright was completely dressed, but the maid was too well trained to show surprise. "Yes, madame," she said, and left the room.

Janet did not dare to look into the mirror now. She paused a moment, till she realized the full force of her fear. Then she went down to her husband's den.

Ripley sat in his smoking jacket, reading. His feet were on a ledge before the fire. "You, my dear?" he grunted, and continued to read.

She spoke in haste for fear of faltering. "Giulio Serafino has come to call upon us. He sails tomorrow. I told Marie that we would see him."

"We, my dear? He is no friend of mine."

"But courtesy, Ripley!" Her fearsome earnestness at the moment was all that saved her from flinging out his phrase, "the proper thing."

"I have no desire to see him. I do not understand these artist fellows that women rave about. Furthermore, my dear"—he flipped the ash of his cigar into the fire—"I am sure that he has no desire to see me." Since she said nothing, he looked up at her and added: "Did he ask for both of us, or only you?"

She was breathing very deeply. "Ripley—for my sake," she said. "I do not want—to see him—alone."

"He sails tomorrow morning, did you say?" said Ripley lightly. "I suppose the parting will be a little sad." He turned his attention to his book.

His attitude of sheer indifference was more terrible than the outbreak she had feared. It overwhelmed her with despair. Piteously then her heart cried out to him.

"When I asked you for a little tenderness this evening, a little love, it was because I needed it. I need it

THE SMART SET

now, Ripley; God knows how much I need it! Don't you understand?"

He turned to her a little worried.

"How can you," she cried—"how dare you, Ripley, leave me so terribly alone?"

He had carried his attitude too far. He rose to his feet and became a man.

"How do I dare?" he said strongly. "I will tell you." He motioned her to a chair, but his wife stood and faced him. "When I asked you to send away that Merrygrue woman I said that I had other motives beside the very ample reasons that I gave you. I did not know you needed to be told them. That woman dared to talk to me at the Wades' the other evening—about you—about you and this sculptor fellow."

Janet waited.

"I saw what was the matter. The little minx was jealous of you. I suppose she ruled the roost at the studio till—what's-his-name—fell in love with you."

Janet said no word.

"Well, do you want to know what I said to the woman? I said: 'I know my wife. If you swore to me before God that she were faithless, I should know that you lied. I may trust my wife to do the proper thing.' That's what I said to your precious little chaperon. That's what I say to you now."

The glow of his old mighty pride in her made him for the moment look heroic. Her heart was overcome with sudden, saving warmth. She cast her arms about his neck and wept.

"There, there, my dear," said Ripley, "let us avoid excitement." Then he added, with something of his former lightness, "Remember Dr. Rogers's prescription."

"Forgive me, Ripley," she sobbed.

"There, there," said he. "You must pull yourself together, my dear. What's-his-name—your sculptor fellow—is waiting in the drawing-room below."

When Janet left the room her husband resumed his reading comfortably, with his feet upon the ledge before the fire. He was an efficient, but not a

gloating man. He did not pause to felicitate himself upon the very proper fact that he knew how to manage his wife. He did not even pause to pity husbands whose ways were less effective than his own. A fresh cigar struck his fancy as the proper thing at the moment. He lighted one.

Slowly his wife descended the magnificent staircase. She paused upon the landings to gather strength; and at each pause the image of Ripley rising heroic stood before her, to dominate the tumult in her heart. Also, the habit of years raised armies to defend her. She was queenly in her strength new gained when she reached the curtains of the drawing-room. But then she did not realize the battle that confronted her.

Dark-eyed Giulio—Giulio of the memorable voice—he was pacing up and down the drawing-room, his black hair flowing beautifully from his forehead. He had come to say good-bye? "No, never that!" She trembled.

He gave her the great gift of understanding. She was not happy with her husband—Giulio knew all. She was damned to live a lie, to give her life to the pursuit of base ideals, ideals that were not hers. Giulio knew her husband: Ripley Cortwright was sordid; he had sold himself for wealth and what he called Society. Giulio knew Janet: she had soul; she understood the quest of beauty. Beauty he could give her, through love, which was the understanding of the beautiful. She must not live a living death. She must flee away with him—with him, who loved her—to white Amalfi seated by the sea—a summer sea, pearling blue and golden beneath the wide, serene, clear sky. A villa there, tinkly with cathedral bells, and he and she alone, alone with Love, whose other name was God! The ship would sail upon the morrow; she must come. No weakness now! Break out and taste the morning! And he, soul servant to Art, with her the queen of it! With her, to rise and overlook the world! No words—dear God, no waste of will in words—but come—come—come!

The high castle of the life she had assumed now trembled with the earthquake that was roused in depths beneath its deep foundations. He felt the tremble and caught her in his arms.

His lithe, strong arms! The wild sweetness of his love now breathing close upon her! The fervor of his kisses, rousing fire where years of tears unshed were powerless to keep her latent life immune! The fury and the beauty of his pleading! Ah, love—love—love! Oh, Ripley, and his pride in her! Oh, Ripley, strong at last to live the hero! But love—love—love!

Madly she strove against the yielding of her heart—alive, alive at last, years after she had wept upon its grave! Madly she fought against the might that called her soul from regions where it long had wandered darkling. Not now—oh, no, not now! Have pity, Love, if you are beautiful! Have pity Love, and spare!

The grandeur of her wild, piteous cry unlocked his arms. "Must I, then, die, who love you?" he exclaimed; and her soul answered: "Live, Giulio; live for me—alone—alone for me—in far Amalfi by the sea of dreams."

And hopeless, then, he left her; for the queenly beauty of her smote upon his love and made it run to worship. "O soul of mine—farewell, a last farewell!" One kiss, and he was gone.

He was gone! And life, that young and new had risen for her, lay dead again, for she had slain it for all time. She knew not why, but she had slain it. And there it would lie dead before her now forever and forever, nor ever hearken to the cries wrung out of her.

It was an hour ere she dared to see her husband.

"Is he gone?" asked Ripley lightly. "I trust the parting was not very sad."

But he had underestimated the fury of the storm within her. "Don't talk to me like that—not now!" she cried. "Ripley, don't you dare to talk to me like that!"

He threw his cigar into the fire and

turned upon her. "There, there, my dear—I understand," said he. "Don't you suppose I knew it all beforehand?"

She could not speak.

"What did he offer you?" said Ripley. "A lot of highflown nonsense, I suppose. What have I given you? There's a difference, isn't there?"

"Ripley," she said, "you have given me wealth." Then her soul rang in her voice as she added: "Giulio offered me love."

"I think you made a very wise choice," her husband continued, unflattered. "Love would have lasted about a year, I think—two years at most. I know. Then there would have been poverty—these artist fellows are never provident. Also, there would have been remorse—or, let us say, a sense of position sacrificed. I was certain you would do the proper thing."

"Have you no heart?" she cried in agony. "Don't you see—don't you understand what I have done for you?"

"My dear," said Ripley, rising, "you are sadly out of sorts. The electric brougham will arrive tomorrow afternoon. I pride myself, as I have said, upon the cushions. I advise a quiet run around the Park."

A month passed.

Janet once again grew stubborn to endure. Having chosen now a second time the life she was to lead, she was brave to live according to her choice. All things had crumbled round her, but strongly she rebuilded her high castle of submissiveness. She was one of the wonderful great suffering few who rise alive from ruin.

She noticed in that month of reconstruction that Ripley's treatment of her grew less cruel. Some vestiges of heart remaining in her made her feel that he was coming slowly to realize the sacrifice that she had made for his ideals. The truth was that her husband had grown a little bit afraid—but this she did not know.

His work continued as engrossing as ever. In spite of Dr. Rogers's advice that he keep as quiet as he could,

he often went downtown still in the evening.

One evening after dinner he was almost tender to her. "Why do you go out tonight, Ripley?" she pleaded. "Wouldn't it be better if you rested?"

"I must go, my dear," he answered. "I must go—to see if—to fix things so that I need never go again."

Something in his voice led her to go down with him to the doorway. There was no moon, but the sky was thick with stars. "Good night, Janet dear," he said, and kissed her. And as he walked down the street he turned and waved his hand. He had not called her by that name for many years.

Janet felt less alone than usual that evening, as she sat before the fire in the library. Was Ripley coming to understand at last? On this theme she mused for hours, and was not utterly unhappy—for hours, until—

The bell rang.

It must be late. She looked at the clock. A quarter of eleven.

The butler brought a card. Dr. Rogers—now!

The doctor's face was grave. "You, Doctor—so late?" said Janet quickly. "Is anything the matter—with Ripley?"

"Yes," he answered; but he had small need to say it.

"His heart—again?"

"Are you brave?" said Dr. Rogers softly.

"Dead?" she answered. "Where?"

The seizure had come upon the street—Forty-third Street, near Broadway.

"Not downtown?"

Fortunately, no. Doubtless he had been talking business in one of the hotels—the Astor, maybe.

"On the street, you said?"

He had been taken into a house, an apartment. The people there had cared for him. They had sent for Dr. Rogers—too late.

"Let us go," said Janet firmly.

A dark-haired, comely little woman met them at the door. "Mrs. Cortwright?" she asked.

"Let me go to him," said Janet. He lay upon a divan, very still. The

scanty hair was mussed upon his forehead. The strange, smooth smile was on his lips.

Ripley—that evening he had seemed almost to understand her, almost to care. Ripley—gone forever now, when she had just begun to win him. Ripley—gone to death—so suddenly—worked to death—for her.

The dark-haired little woman seemed to care. She had sympathetic eyes. Janet thanked her for her kindness. An ambulance had answered Dr. Rogers's summons. Janet kissed the little woman before she went away.

All the next afternoon Janet sat beside her husband in the silent room at home. She could not feel unkindly toward him now. She knew that she did not love him; but her heart forgave him that, as well as all the rest. She accused herself of many sins against the dead. She ought not to have blamed him for living his own life, though his living it had wrecked her own. She ought not to have blamed him because he did not understand her; it was so very hard to understand. He had given her the best he could conceive. Wealth and position had been everything to him, and these he had given her. He had given her his all—had worked for her—had died for her. "Freedom from excitement"—and often she had tried him sorely—most of all that tragic evening a month ago. And there he lay so still.

She bent over the pale and silent body. "Forgive me, Ripley," she murmured. Her heart was in the words.

His face still wore the old inscrutable smile.

Another month passed.

A note from Mrs. Cortwright's lawyer asked her to come to his office to consider some final questions concerning the estate.

Janet went to see him. For a while he talked details of mere routine. Then, "Another thing," he added. "I am sorry that I have to tell you, Mrs. Cortwright, but—a woman has been here to see me. She asked for money—promised her, she said."

"A woman!" Janet murmured. Then the truth broke over her.

"She had a paper to show. It proved the promise."

"What did she look like?" Janet asked.

The lawyer had expected something else. "She was a small woman," he answered.

"Dark hair, comely little figure, lurking eyes?" said Janet very rapidly.

"You have seen her, then?" the lawyer asked her in surprise.

"I kissed her," Janet said.

He did not know exactly what to say. "Well—about the money?" he ventured.

"Give it to her. Give her all she asks." A strange smile swept over Janet's face. "Let us do the proper thing," she added.

"I hardly think the woman will be troublesome."

Janet did not seem to hear. "Money—" she murmured. "I could forgive her if only she had loved him."

She went home to her mansion on Riverside Drive. There was a tumult in her. Ripley—Ripley of the smooth smug smile—Giulio—Giulio of the memorable voice—Ah, God! Ripley, and "the proper thing"! Ripley, and Forty-third Street!

She rushed up to her own boudoir. Her tall cheval glass met her coming. Her pulse was beating wildly as she looked upon that queenly form of hers demurely dressed in mourning. Fiercely she felt the horrid incongruity of what had been her life. She tore off her pretty mourning hat, stabbed it with a hatpin and flung it far across the room. Then she looked up and down that black form in the mirror and laughed uproariously.



MEMORY

By ROSALIE ARTHUR

NOT when the breath of springtime strikes my heart,
Sweeping a minor chord from out its strings,
Nor in the wistful autumn's quiet days
When no bird sings,

Nor yet in winter's pure austerity, that chills
My soul, nor when, in summer's ripening hour,
I gather in the upland fields alone
Life's everlasting flower,

Not while the cycle of the passing years
Moves on from budding leaf to wintry blast
Can I forget you, O my friend of friends—
Not while my life shall last.

CHERRY BLOOM

By CLINTON SCOLLARD

CHERRY bloom in Cherry Valley
At the turning of the spring,
Robins in each leafy alley
With their mellow chorusing,
And the bobolinks a-sally
As they twitter on the wing!"

All the world a space of wonder,
Emerald earth and golden sky,
Happiness above and under,
As the truant hours slip by;
Honey for the bees to plunder—
Cherry bloom for me, say I!

For there's one comes down the highway
With soft blossoms on her cheek;
Will she turn her glances my way—
Will she, if I dare to speak?
Oh, for some long, shady byway,
Though her answers were in Greek!

There'd be shy looks most appealing
Interchanged 'twixt wooing eyes;
There'd be little gusts of feeling—
Having voice in smothered sighs;
And there'd be my arm a-stealing
Round her waist in tender wise.

Cherry bloom in Cherry Valley!
Sooth, it's but a vagrant beam,
Vision of some Sue or Sally,
Lips aglow and cheeks agleam.
Yet, who does not love to dally
With the glamour and the dream!



A WOMAN regrets her first gray hair, a man his last.

THE MINISTER AND THE MAN

By BILLEE GLYNN

HAD he been anything but an ordinary young minister, who had come out of his university a little threadbare and cobwebbed in his views, patted honorably on the back and his only frock coat, and with a gray, sensitive, though ambitious grip on the orthodox, all-appearing duties of life, it might never have happened. Neither might it have happened, perhaps, had the town where he entered upon his labors and the career that stretched so narrowly, soberly, yet hopefully before him been less to his own peculiar making—that is, a little threadbare and cobwebbed, too. But it was only an ordinary town after all, so not to be blamed, just as he was but an ordinary young minister, with instincts gathered from a childhood, if not of penury, at least of scraping; the ordinary small town of some two thousand souls, and the seams that made up its patched social garment showing miserably on closer view.

He came to it a little nervous at first—so nervous that his inauguration sermon fell rather flat—and he had sufficient reason. It was not only his first experiment in actual life, but his predecessor had had a hard time of it—being, at length, forcibly ousted from his pulpit. Granton, however, was received with the utmost cordiality, and he was popular from the first; he was an unmarried man.

Six months in St. Albans, and Granton had begun to dream. It wasn't exactly his nature to dream, but he was helped on in it. Every new and attending circumstance seemed but to bring another twig to his sparrow's nest of possibilities. His congregation

had become as nearly as could be, he felt, a perfect running machine of which he knew the parts and oiling. It required care and discretion, of course, for there were many he might offend, but he was both careful and discreet, and he had got rid, in the greater part, of his initial nervousness. He had written back to his aunt, indeed—the relative who had served him as a sort of mother—a rather glowing description of his handling of a hard prospect, and in that letter he had stated most of the facts.

The Ladies' Aid Society, in his six months of control, had doubled its membership. Mrs. Merton, who had been at the head of the smaller faction within it, now worked quite amiably with Mrs. Keswick, the banker's wife, who was its real head. At least, they spoke to each other at times, and referred things to one another in committees in cold, businesslike voices. The choir had been strengthened materially, and if the impossible voices—social voices—had not been altogether rooted out by creating other offices for them, they were at least supplemented in a manner to make them less apparent. The missionary society had made a record in the matter of clothes for the infidels, and the patchwork quilt bore more initials at fifty cents per patch than any other quilt in the history of the church. The parsonage in its fittings showed several tokens of the general esteem in which the new minister was held. The "house furnishing" committee, indeed, had been particularly attentive. It was composed mostly of young ladies, and Laura Keswick was at the head of it—not very

young, perhaps, but preserved and exceedingly well dressed. The Women's Auxiliary, too, was in the most flourishing state; new committees had been formed in all departments of the work, giving everyone a chance to do something, and, on the whole, there was a general improvement over the conditions that had previously existed. Granton had reason to congratulate himself—though, after the first spontaneous gush of his welcome had died to something more normal, he did so with a better knowledge of the situation.

There was another side to it, after all. In a word, he had learned in six months what the first few weeks had failed to impress on him—the danger cogs which without proper handling might easily throw his machine out of gear and make it fatal to his interests. So far he had succeeded, but succeeded by tact. Practically still a stranger in the community, his measure in many ways had not yet been fully taken, his limitations tested; and in the attentions accorded him he detected more than once an undercurrent of challenge that might easily rage a torrent, and a roughness in the velvet that carried a presage of claws. He had countered, however, by petting the claws that could hurt worst—the Keswicks—or rather letting them pet him—with a show of courtesy and dignity elsewhere, so he had a right to be optimistic. The Keswicks were not only the pillars of the church but were at the head of town society, and they had taken him up—Mrs. Keswick first in a motherly way, then Laura. It was here the dream had begun and the nest of possibilities looked big enough for a mate. For, as it happened, Granton, at the age of twenty-five, had never been taken up before—and Laura was quite girlish even yet.

Indeed, there was a clinging confidengness about her at times that was peculiarly girlish. In dignity she was everything. And if at times there appeared even through her girlishness no inconsiderable shading of the managing, proprietorial instincts of her mother

and the calculating nature of her father—one of those men with a constant phlegm in his throat—her mother was nevertheless a fine, proud woman, and her father a shrewd, careful man, and such qualities fitted her all the more to handle a small income. Granton thought so with admiration. Then, she had a fine head of blonde hair, a one-time prettiness that still appealed to a man who had never made love to any woman, a neat, dainty figure, and long, trailing silk skirts that she held up in the most charming manner over long, flounced silk petticoats. On the whole, she was a person to be looked up to, and without need to be either kind or approachable, yet was both. She had been born for no other purpose than to be a minister's wife, and had known it herself for at least ten years. Granton was beginning to find it out, too.

For a month, in fact, he had been telling it to the smallest rose that nestled close at hand and away from the host of other roses bending their heads embarrassedly in the green quadrangle of his back lawn. Laura was the last daughter of the house, and though there had been six, Keswick had given each at her marriage property to the value of four or five thousand dollars. There could be no mistake, for Laura had told Granton herself. She was in the habit of telling him little things like that. Beyond this, with Keswick's daughter the minister's wife, and Keswick practically the head of the church—well, the conclusion was inevitable. The minister of that congregation would never duplicate the exit of his predecessor.

No, sir! The rose nodded its head sagely, cunningly, ambitiously after thoughts like these, then, with a glance around at its churchly environments, dropped a white petal or two of conscience and forgot that it had been thinking such things at all. Wasn't the lady, after all, a person to be looked up to? Didn't she teach a class in Sunday school and play the organ for the choir? Didn't she do countless other things in connection with com-

mittees, prayer meetings and the like? Wasn't she always doing something, indeed, like the thorough church woman she was—even when it wasn't necessary? Then, she had been kind—kind, decidedly, and approachable. Yes, truly, she had been cut out for a minister's wife, and in conclusion the rose could not help but acquiesce in the fact, just as everybody else in the world of St. Alban's had done long ago—and Granton of late.

It had come to the point where he had put on a new coat and a rose in the buttonhole to tell the lady herself the next time she came. How she happened, in the first place, to come at all to that back lawn where he prepared his sermons on the low veranda was quite an ordinary incident. She had always something to refer to him and there was only one place to find him, so she found him there—and it was a matter of business. It was a matter of business after that, too, till he began to look for her coming, and if she lingered a little longer at times than was necessary in a business way it was of no account, since gossip could never reach up to her. It was a secluded little back lawn, and the roses made it poetic.

To the rose in the buttonhole, however, there was no response. On the second day Granton learned that she had been called out of town rather unexpectedly—and changed his coat. His mind he had not changed. For a lover, indeed, he felt absurdly sure of his ground—with just a little of the nervousness of a man who had no experience in making love to a woman. Things had never come to him so easily before, and he was gratified at the prospect and the compliment paid him. And if he always thought to the rose first the things that he did not say, he thought of the woman herself afterwards—or thought he did, and said so conclusively with all the certainty of sincerity of an ordinary young minister. Yes, let his steeples run to whatever sky they would—and they couldn't but run to a proper one—he loved Laura Keswick for herself.

This conclusion he had reached in the ultimate on the third day, as usual—then a little wiggly, wobbly pup, that knew nothing of steeples whatever, ran across the lawn. It came from the adjoining yard and had taken advantage of a board that was off the rather high fence. That was the way it got in and a laugh followed it. It was the laugh, of course, that attracted Granton's attention. For the last two or three days he had heard that laugh repeatedly, and while it was a sweet, thrilling, musical sound and new to the vicinity, it belonged to the other yard entirely, so he had nothing to do with it. The person who lived there was a grass widow of very moderate means and no particular congregation. About her, too, there had been much ill-flavored gossip. Granton, in truth, had long ago decided that the board must be renailed, but he had neglected to do so, and now a person was looking through the aperture who wasn't the widow at all, yet a most startling apparition to a young man—even one thinking so seriously of another woman. As she was all eyes and supplications for the dog, however, she did not see him, and finally, as a last resource, she stepped boldly inside and ran the dog around a shrub. The whole of her was even worse than half. Granton had never seen anything quite so beautiful, so joyful, so young, yet grown up, and when she at last saw him he had got down off the veranda and was smiling at her in a queer, embarrassed manner. Then, by way of covering his confusion and combating the explanation she seemed about to make, he raced after the puppy and brought it to her in his arms.

She had deep blue eyes, he noticed, a wonderful freshness of skin, and auburn hair that covered the head in masses of waves. She was vivid, frank, with a look of force and piquant daring about her. She had also bewildering eyelashes, and she dropped them over her eyes when she had thanked him, and cast a swift glance over him.

"I think," she said with a movement toward the fence, then a slight pause,

"that you had better renail the board, or the doggie and I may be straying in here too often."

"But you couldn't do that," he rejoined quickly.

"But are you not a minister?" she asked respectfully. "And isn't this your back lawn?"

"So it is," he ejaculated with a flushed face and a remembrance of dignity. Then quite unconsciously he glanced reproachfully at the church steeple.

As for her—well, she threw back her head and laughed a note or two, then left him suddenly with the challenge of fun in her eyes.

He went back to his sermon after that, and to patrician thoughts of the other woman. The smallest rose was a little ruffled, however. It was all very foolish and beneath him, but she, at least, had no business telling him so—not a bit. Who was she, anyway? Mrs. Kenrose's sister, he expected—he had heard something about her having a sister visiting her. And who was Mrs. Kenrose? Nobody could help being somebody else's sister, of course, and it was rather too bad, for she was really pretty, but—Well, he was minister to St. Albans' wealthiest congregation—and she had laughed!

The smallest rose was very thoughtful all the next morning and up till three o'clock in the afternoon. After that there was another rosebush in the widow's back lawn—quite discernible through the hole in the fence—and when a young lady who couldn't help being the widow's sister got a thorn in her hand, it was only proper and charitable that a young minister who couldn't help feeling sorry in the cause of a common humanity should cross over and take it out. The trouble with a thorn, however, is that it takes time to get it out and you have to hold hands. When Granton returned to his own yard, the steeple was not quite steady in the sky and the smallest rose was mum. He was not nearly so much, indeed, the minister of St. Albans' wealthiest congregation nor the widow the widow as had been the case the

day before, and there were pulses that he had hitherto known nothing about. Of course, he was quite calm in it all, too—why shouldn't he be? A passer-by had seen him, but what difference? A thorn was a thorn, and let them look into the circumstances. It began and ended there—yes, ended there. Laura would be home in a day or two. So she rode out in the mornings, as she said, to get the sweep of the air. Well, it was a good idea, and he had thought of it himself, but had never fixed his saddle.

By way of nothing better to do, perhaps, he wandered down to the stable and did fix it, then rubbed down his pony. In conclusion, he sat smiling unconsciously for a long time about nothing whatever, and when he looked at his hand it trembled visibly. He got up at that with a frown and stamped up and down the stable. What was the matter with him, anyway, and why did he fix that saddle? He remembered his congregation, the widow, and that the passer-by had seen him. He remembered Laura and his dream to the smallest rose. He recalled with dignity the fact that a pony and saddle could be used any time of the day as well as just in the morning—that he stood quite clear and that there would be nothing to it. Then he went slowly back to the house and set his alarm for a dewy six o'clock.

II

It was glorious! They were riding straight into the east, Granton just a pace behind to catch the look of her in the saddle. She was a part of the sunrise, a part of the dew, a part of the movement, a part of everything—perhaps most of all a part of the earth meeting heaven halfway, warm and basking in the sun. It was most out of the ordinary for an ordinary young minister, indeed, and as one Granton was not a little nervous. As a man, however, he was overjoyed. The rush of air came to them with a dewy fragrance, and the sanded road fell behind

in gray, gleaming puffs. The country was golden in its running wheatfields as a youth's unshorn beard and the green roadside shot out at them vividly. On the whole, there was altogether too much exhilaration for orthodox restraint—and a man who had never made love to any woman but for his own sake wanted to love another. It was shimmering with life and Granton was a reader of books. For the time, in truth crushed somewhere behind, he had a feeling of being but a mere mummer of things, and he combated it with something that made him a stranger to himself. This new self, half thrilling and perplexing, he tried to analyze as he rode along—and with it the woman. As the young minister, he was sure of one thing, at least—that she wasn't above flirting with him as a young minister. Beyond that again, however, there was something inevitably true and natural about her which placed her above flirting at all—or perhaps raised it to her own level.

She, on her part, seemed to be enjoying the situation. When the first gallop was over and they paused to breathe their horses, she turned to him, laughing with the relish of it.

"You ride well," she remarked, "and I wouldn't have thought it."

For a moment he flushed, then with a half-struggle and a sense of hitting, the ordinary young minister struck down his egotism. "I learned it when a boy," he answered simply.

"Do you know"—with a considering pause—"I believe you're improving."

"What do you mean?"

"That you're not quite so good since you met me—and a whole lot better."

He tried to laugh, but it didn't sound right, and she turned at him in the saddle. "I mean it," she said half seriously. "Don't you think you try to be too good—that you try to teach people to be too good, and they end up by being artificially nothing? If you gave them leave to do a little wrong, would it be so hard for them to do right? I'd just like to teach you."

"To be bad?"

"To be natural—whatever that is.

To be unconventional, to be yourself—and neither afraid to live nor afraid to die, to love the world a little for itself."

"I don't think you should say those things to me." It was the young minister who spoke altogether this time and he was roiled.

She laughed suddenly. If I didn't think you were worth while—that you had one or two good qualities left—I mightn't, you know. You should be rather glad, I think, that I speak to you at all."

It was his new self that laughed pleasedly at her conceit and the compliment paid him. "Really," he said, "I don't mind you in the least."

"But I want you to—to be a little bad—at least when you're along with me." And the challenge in the smile she flashed him sparkled even in the sunlight.

"We're all that, I guess." The young minister spoke again.

"But you're not frank about it. Do you know, there was an old minister who told me once that no one had a right to preach to other people till he had learned how by living, and that very few knew. Charity, love, forbearance, he said, were all arts acquired only by suffering, and were the hardest to learn."

"But charity is always right."

She smiled again. "Not when you give away your soul."

He rode on for a minute in silence, frowning queerly and watching her as he might a primitive child of simple, startling revelations.

"I'd like to know how much of all this you really believe."

"None of it, perhaps." She had turned to him with a blithe, reckless movement.

"Then you admit it is not right?"

"I don't care whether anything is right or not, so long as it is good enough to live by."

"I don't think I understand."

"That's because you were not brought up right—you should have learned more when you were a boy."

The ordinary young minister and the

other self were struggling visibly in his face. "What would you have taught me, then?" he asked a little indignantly.

She paused for a moment to loose the rein on her pony, then flashed it at him deliberately. "Oh, I don't know—perhaps to make love to a girl!"

The impudence of it was breathtaking, for the best of it had been in her eyes—and the ordinary young minister fell before it down the years to the boy who would not be boasted over. "Oh, he protested, "I guess I know how to do that!"

He knew it was ridiculous, but not how much so till she laughed.

"Oh, fishhooks!" she mocked. "I caught a bigger one still!"

Then they both laughed together till the morning jingled with it, and it was the jolliest, merriest peal that ever came from the young minister's throat.

But it was the same after that. She still mocked at him, cajoled him, startled him, challenged him; most of all, perhaps, bewildered and allured him, with a certain delicacy in her treatment at times that made up for everything. Jostled, pounded and knuckled on all the things he thought proper and to which he had been accustomed, he never quite knew at any moment what side was up nor how much was meant. It was a good side, however, and the blood was flowing in his veins. On reaching home about an hour later, there was only enough of the ordinary young minister left to recall with satisfaction the fact that they had met no one and that the widow's house was at the beginning of the street.

It happened just in like way the next morning, of course—a matter purely of getting the "sweep of the air." He did not suffer so much this time, however, and made a great deal better showing. In fact, he had improved wonderfully, and that afternoon on the back veranda had to cut out many a stray, unordinary thought that angel-like and unaware had slipped into his sermon. About four o'clock, moreover, he deliberately coaxed the pup into

his yard and kept it there till the girl came and found it. Then, when she was leaving—and it was not immediately after—he had even the audacity to pluck the smallest rose with the dream it had dreamed and pin it deliberately on her breast.

He wondered why she laughed so when he did it and ducked so quickly through the fence, but he was to find out a moment later. He turned away; another woman was standing there on the walk. With a pert significance she spoke straight to the point, then turned her back on him. Laura was home and would like to see him at the latest by tomorrow evening—if he were not too busy!

It was Verna Smith, Miss Keswick's best friend, a confirmed gossip and in the first instance not averse to an ordinary young minister herself. It was the most ordinary and world-stricken of ministers that she left standing there in the lawn.

III

THE two weeks following passed much like a landscape on a home journey that grew and grew into familiarity. It had been but a scare, after all, yet, as Granton conceded in his first free breath, a good one. He would never tempt fate and Miss Smith to such a degree again. He thought it almost in the tone in which he pronounced his benedictions. Miss Smith, of course, had not resisted temptation, but her giving way to it had not mattered. He knew she had told Laura—perhaps more—for she was somewhat cold in manner when he went up that evening in response to her message, but she was the same as ever in a day or two. Yes, she was even, he fancied, just a trifle kinder. He had made every concession, of course, but Miss Smith's story, after all, had been wrong in one particular—that she was not averse to a young minister herself. A young minister did not think of this maybe, but he benefited by the fact that a woman can think of most things—even a church woman. Mrs. Keswick thought of her maid, for instance.

Mrs. Keswick was a thoughtful woman. On her side, she was particularly nice to him that evening—it was as if she knew men, their weaknesses and temptations.

My, but his housekeeper was a long time returning! And that woman who attended to things in the morning must be a perfect nuisance—at least that was her reputation! Really, it couldn't go on any longer—not another day. She would let him have one of her maids to look after him in the daytime till his housekeeper came back. She should have thought of it before. No, it was all right. She could spare her well enough—indeed she could. It was too bad, really, that one could not afford to be friendly with the widow Kenrose next door, as it would have been so handy to have paid her to go in and look after things. It would never do to mingle with that sort, however, particularly when they didn't belong to the church—nor to any church, in fact. He had never heard of it, perhaps, but Mrs. Kenrose had herself to thank for being a grass widow. Supposing her husband *was* a plain, commonplace fellow, not up to her, maybe, in education or good looks; and supposing also he *had* been her cousin, as they said, and she *had* married him at her uncle's request when she was quite young for the sake of some money they got together—that was no reason she should let another man make love to her when she was a married woman. It was the very last thing any woman should do. And Phil Davenport had made love to her—downright, emphatic love and out in the open, as he had made love to other women—and she had returned it in the same way. That was the worst of it—to stand out and face a whole community. If they had kept it a little to themselves it wouldn't have been so bad. But to call it an "honorable flirtation," laugh everyone in the face, Jim Kenrose included, get him so angry at what people were saying that he picked up and left, then send his share of the money after him, that he might never come back, and throw up the other man in the same instant

as well—that was certainly going too far, and any woman who did it had a right to be avoided.

Granton, of course, in all this mostly agreed. The widow was impossible—and the widow's sister? Miss Smith had swept her from him, and him back to the old things, as though nothing had been. He had spent a night of penance and a morning of it. He had given away his world with the smallest rose, and all the white petals of the dream it had dreamed lay strewn on the ground. There was no use whatever of telling himself that it was, after all, but a small matter. It was everything—for it risked everything so far as he knew anything. And for all he had risked, a sort of ecstasy possessed him in this time of apprehension that gave it a halo—even the thoughts to the smallest rose that he didn't say. On the other hand, his late experience stood in base contradiction, with all its strange thrills laughing him harlequin-like in the face.

What things she had said! And in what manner he had answered! He had allowed her to make fun of him and cudgel him, too—cudgel him with a sharp edge till it pained in twinges.

But to have such apprehension met by Mrs. Keswick's kindness and Mrs. Keswick's maid, to find Laura, if a little cold, not completely frozen—he was thankful—yes, even for the maid.

Laura was dressed in gray silk that night, a shimmering, clinging gray that rustled softly in faint perfume as she moved. She was a rather thin girl and rather short on high heels. The large, blonde and sere-touched beauty of her head she held tilted in a manner that was flowerlike and proud, but on a bust and neck somewhat insignificant. Her physique and spirit, indeed, seemed a little too weak always for her claim at the aristocratic, but her purity was quite as white and perfect as that of an artificial flower. With a small woman's tenacity she clung to a girlishness that babbled. It contributed wonderfully to her "helpfulness," her chief characteristic.

For the time, however, she was cold

—and in his paradise regained Granton worshiped her aloofness. It was not impossible, but suggestive of paradise lost. He met it with grave courtesy and in the strength of his renunciation a conducting of himself that he could scarcely believe. His chaff of folly had flown down the wind and left the dignity behind that robes proper penance. In his sermon the young minister might have termed it heroically "bursting the bonds of the Evil One." Fervor had sobered to mastery; it was victory behind, not merely an avoiding of temptation.

When Laura walked to the gate with him and gave vent again to an outburst of "helpfulness," he went home thinking the ecstasy of all she represented.

The days chattered along like a covey of snowbirds. There was heaven; there were glimpses of things sublime and there were flutterings to earth. It was "Charity Week," for one thing, and there were, besides, many special meetings and preparations for the anniversary in the following month.

For all that, the work was mostly spasmodic, and there was time for reflection. There was even time for study on the back veranda—but none of it was done there. Moreover, the board, if not nailed on, stood against the aperture, and when the young minister heard a voice singing on the other side of the fence he frowned determinedly and made haste with whatever he might be doing. But he kept out of the back lawn just as much as possible. That late experience, when it flashed over him, carried a peculiar jar. He called it shame, yet made it a point always to lie abed beyond a certain hour in the mornings.

He heard her going once—the dance of the pony's hoofs down the hard gravel lane, and caught a glimpse of her in the saddle—the free, wind-blown grace and the laughing, piquant lips. That instant, like a drunkard with the odor of wine at his nostrils, he stood transfixed, the blood surging audibly in his brain—then he came back to himself with white face and

clenched hands. What did it mean? It was gone as it came—a slap in the face out of the very air, and left only a blighted, parched sense behind that could not be analyzed. A keener, more sensitive grip on the things he held, that was all, and his kindness to Laura that day had more than a touch of penance in it. His attentions knew no limits. Sunday he preached the most orthodox sermon of his life.

With her it was festival time, indeed. To the many church functions opened in such sudden array her "helpfulness" ran over—a stirring sight surely for an ordinary young minister. And Granton was duly and dutifully stirred, but there were flashes of things, sidelights foreign and inevitable into which he lapsed at times, yet regretted with a half-frenzy.

"Charity Week" was peculiar to that particular congregation. It was a rest from "foreign missions," for which Mrs. Keswick was noted, when alms of divers kinds were doled out to the poor that lay nearest the heart of the church. It was rest for the fact that Mrs. Keswick permitted other ladies to govern in it, and having given her share, stood back in her superior way and looked on. In itself it was a rather tedious business, as charity always is so near at home. It carried neither romance nor glory, for St. Albans had more cases of want that in the matter of actual comfort it could properly look after the year around. In climate, with its miles and miles of nearby marsh, it was notoriously unhealthy; it had little manufacturing, and for reasons unaccountable an unusual drifting of the working class. Then there were those who clung there from boom days before the largest peat manufactory in the State had been burnt down. So a day's work was a gamble in St. Albans, and in the lower class a loaf of bread sometimes a luxury. There were sickly children and mothers, asthmatic fathers and odd, decrepit, aged, who leaned on crutches and watched the days fade in the west. Yet, after all, these were a minority, a fragment habitated at the marsh side of the town. There

was a larger, middle and well-to-do class, retired farmers and others, who jingled small incomes in snug pockets and attended to their gardens. There were one or two plutocrats, particularly Keswick; there were five churches and denominations—and there was charity.

"Charity Week," however, as said before, pertained only to Granton's congregation. It stood out as a token and moral badge against the more desultory processes of the other churches. It had been originated, of course, by Mrs. Keswick—as nearly everything was—though after the term of initiation she stood back and watched the others proceed. This year Laura was practically at the head of it—or rather a partner with the repentant young minister.

It was she who in the greater degree selected the names of those they would aid. So-and-so was nice—Mrs. Barber had seen much better circumstances, poor thing—No, she didn't think so; they hadn't a very good name—But there was Mrs. Biggins, she took everything so gratefully—And the Franks; they always remembered you and were willing to do small favors in return—It was too bad about John Gray, of course, but there were reports that his consumption was not nearly so bad as they said; and then he was an agnostic and some of the other congregations would look after him—As for the Thompson children, poor, starved little things, every one of them would get clothes to go to Sunday school.

It was also Laura who decided the question of what to give in rather graceful debate in a later meeting that had been called. She was dressed in a long silk skirt, and as she stood fronting her audience she smiled rather timidly, as a bride might. Granton admired her very much that night.

She did not think it advisable to give them money, because their condition clearly showed that they didn't know how to spend it. As for food and the like, it would have to be, of course, in a limited number of cases, but on the whole, it would require so much as to

be rather costly—and such a lot had to be spent on "foreign missions" that their means were small. On the other hand, however, and what was more important, very few of these people had clothes to go to church, and there was scarcely anyone in the congregation but had somewhere about some respectable cast-off garments they would be glad to give. Why not gather these and sort them out? It would cost nothing whatever, and was the most important kind of charity to get these people to church.

The point was won—without difficulty. It was not only Laura herself speaking in all her considerate girlish helpfulness, but the clear, calculating business sense of Laura's father as well and her mother's dignified conceptions and firm, Puritan standards. Why that half-shudder of nausea should in afterthought have crept over Granton, as it had persisted in doing at times, was an enigma even to himself. It was a morbidness of which he was ashamed as a young minister. That night he stood the board a little closer to the aperture in his back fence and spent the days thereafter with a devout heart and in Laura's company delivering charity in the shape of cast-off garments.

Experience in the matter enforced the truth of Laura's point of view. There were sickness and poverty enough, more than enough for a town double the size of St. Albans, but in it all there was little inducement to charity and less response. A gleam here and there—that was all. For the rest, despondency, sullen pride and a squalor at times from which the young minister insensibly held his coattails as did Laura her silks.

With that sensitiveness which was in the habit of flashing over him of late, he wondered at times, indeed, seeing Laura sitting on the corner of a chair and proffering charity in her superb, "Miss Keswick" way, if they were not just a little overdoing the thing, and allowing the instincts of their own living to control them rather too much. It was his first real experience in the

understrata. But, no, the thing was impossible; the people were impossible; where there were no hearts to touch, even charity was a poor thing. Laura had been perfectly right. It was moral persuasion these people wanted more than anything else—to be taught some sense of appreciation and soul.

It was dismal work, and Laura, as mistress of ceremonies, in spite of all her "helpfulness," was toward the last complainingly tired of it. In the lack of response to their efforts mutual sympathy had brought them into closer touch.

"I am just creepy," the superb Miss Keswick would say, coming out of some ungrateful hovel. "I shall need a complete change of things."

Yet did she persist with all the valor of one born to be a minister's wife. Granton admired her thoroughly. He was tired, too, and had got rid of his sensitiveness—though he still slept beyond a certain hour in the mornings. It was John Gray who wakened him.

The woman came running to them one evening when they were on their way home, and almost dragged them into the house. Her brother had gone mad or something, she said, and she was afraid. They found him not mad but raving—a still passionate, middle-aged man in the last stages of consumption.

She was dying down there, he said, and no one would go to her. They called her bad, but they didn't know her. She was good—so good! Yes, and he loved her, though they had not spoken for twenty years. And she was dying there alone in that third house by the bridge.

He had one sane moment only before he went off in a swoon. In that instant he caught Granton by both hands and made him promise to go to her at once. They worked with him gently till he was breathing quite easily again; then the young minister and Miss Keswick took their departure. The sister had told them what third house it was, and the blood was in Miss Keswick's face.

"Do you think you had better go?"

she asked, as they paused outside. "You know, do you not? She was put out of the church. Persons like that have always some friend to look after them without anyone else bothering."

"Perhaps," returned Granton, "but I have promised. It may be I should have gone before when I knew she was so sick." There was a sternness in his tone. Something elemental, half-thrilling in the eyes of the man on the bed had crept into his blood. "I will take you home first, though," he added after a short silence.

But Miss Keswick was too heroic for that. It would not look well. She would go along with him, too, and wait for him outside.

She did wait and Granton went in. Beside the thin, faded person who opened the door for him, another woman was bending over the prostrate figure in the bed, and he stood trembling suddenly, his world sweeping from beneath his feet. Unconsciously for the moment she had been all tenderness, but when she turned to him there was the hint of flame in her eyes, and her piquant lips breathed a flash of the white, strong teeth.

Yet she spoke nicely—if with amused satire. "You're a little late—even for Mrs. O'Rourke," she said quietly. "I don't think we can use you; we're getting along so nicely without anyone."

She was ready to go, and she went, saying nothing more. In an inward convulsion Granton stood and watched her through the window—the proud, virile sweep of her body, her magnificent, beautiful womanhood. He was feeling, thinking everything in a moment of time, and feeling, thinking it in a way that was entirely new. He saw the look of utter incomprehension, the slight shrug of the shoulders she gave the other woman at the gate; then he became aware of the thin, cutting voice on the bed.

It was the complete disgust, the patient misery of it that hurt worst. "No, we've no use for you," it said. "I was sick for three weeks alone, drag-

ging myself around half fainting, and it was well known; but none of you church people could find it out, though I live up here among you and was once a member. Now that a strange young lady did find it out and got a nurse and a doctor and comes once a day herself, I'll not need you. It's her money, but I guess I'll pay her back some time. I do wish you would go."

She turned from him weakly, throwing an arm over the hair that was still beautiful. What coarseness may have belonged to her, sickness had erased. Broken, pathetic, in the profile of the face was only that which pertained to proud, impulsive womanhood and the infinite tragedy of it.

Granton stood fumbling with the doorknob. He was also fumbling for his thoughts—for the thing he had always fancied was his soul. Nothing came to him, however, and he went out.

They were down the street some distance before either spoke. Miss Keswick's "heroicness" had drooped suddenly to a pretty tiredness that called for sympathy, and she did not notice his change of manner. Then she remembered something.

"Who was that person who came out?" she asked, an accent in her tone.

Granton turned to her with a straight matter-of-fact earnestness. "It was the Widow Kenrose's sister," he said quietly, yet with force.

Miss Keswick slightly pursed her lips. "I told you," she said, "there was always someone of that kind to take care of those people."

Granton's tone was almost brutal. "Then, I admire their kind," he averred. "That young lady has been keeping that woman and paying her doctor's bill out of her own pocket, when no one else would go near her. It's a case of real charity."

IV

THE following morning the young minister did not sleep beyond a certain hour. From a night of torment—a night in which he stood on precipices and

fell down them—he rose with one idea. And the idea led to a woman with an amused, satirical look on her face, a shrug of her shoulders he could not stand. Before these everything swept away in the free, natural current of life following its single desire.

He caught her about a hundred yards down the road and humbly requested her company. She acceded with the same shrug of her shoulders and his words broke out in a torrent.

He told her what he had come to think of himself, and in it—though he did not know it—he told her what he had come to think of her. He admitted that he had been artificial—yes, all his life; that he had mistaken form for sincerity, for religion itself; that perhaps his congregation did, too; that in towns of that size there was too much pandering to persons, to small social cliques and their ideals—that it seemed inevitable, but was none the less insincere. She was the only one who had ever taught him anything. Wouldn't she believe in him—wouldn't she? He believed in her—yes, even her laughter; she had taught him that, too.

The woman, of course, in her woman's way made no answer to this—at least in words. But she did not try to appear surprised, and there was an answer in her eyes—a side glance at times that took in her companion in the deepest way. He was no longer the ordinary young minister, but a boy—a sorry, eager boy, sparkling with *camaraderie* and with the sudden secret of his heart in his eyes. Every gird of his being had broken to its first primitive spirit that rode out into another and delightful world. So the woman saw him as a person altogether new—and it had been she who had accomplished it. And a woman loves her work.

Of course, she may not have loved him then, but there are places where love begins; and the days followed one another, and they still rode together and she still taught him things. Thus it was that the now unordinary young minister defied gossip and everything else and prepared a sermon nothing

less than revolutionary, considering town ethics, that he might, as he thought, bring the bigger truths home to his congregation. He delivered that sermon, too, and over it the elders put their heads together and shook them behind his back—so, after all, he really earned the memories those six days brought him. These—they were splashes of conversation, of exquisite daring, of high, free emotion, of the natural sweep of a natural world—of a woman most of all and the single, splendid glory of her.

That time when he dismounted to get her the handful of buttercups growing by the roadside:

"Nothing could be sweeter," she said, as she took them from him. He answered her very decidedly, "Yes," looking her straight in the face. And she blushed to the roots of her hair. It was boldness extraordinary for an ordinary young minister. But there had been a certain gentle consideration in her manner to him of late.

They were discussing life, their horses reined at the bottom of the high hill that rose to the north of the town. She stretched her hand upward with an almost passionate gesture.

"Oh, I love height!" she said. "How small we are down here—how small we must all look, even our sins, from that heaven you have been always talking about! Would that hill look right if it were trimmed perfectly—would it be beautiful? Our morality is nearly all fussiness and details; there is nothing natural about it—nothing daring, nothing high!"

She was in the habit of saying such things. It was in this line of thought her philosophy of life seemed to run. Nothing was very bad to her, nothing very good. It was just life with the human heart beating through—that and the grace to laugh and, an impulsive hate for the smaller things.

For a quarter of a mile or so they raced every morning. "You are always behind," she said to him on one of these occasions, when she had beat him out.

"It's a sign," he returned, "that I would follow you a long way."

She answered him with a musing look. "I've been wondering how far," she said. "Are you sure, after all, that you would not fall back?"

"No—to the ends of the earth," he rejoined seriously.

She laughed, yet with a certain note of pensiveness. "Even a minister will say things," she said. "We'll see!"

He remembered that conversation long, long afterwards. There were just enough passages like these to give an undercurrent of sweet seriousness to her gay, quick banter—enough consideration and real expression of herself to impress yet still leave her the elusive, alluring quality of her womanhood.

At the spring that day the poetry of the August afternoon had caught them.

"It is just like you," he suggested, referring to the water—"always bubbling from depths musically and without reason."

"Is there any reason for anything?" she asked. "And doesn't reason spoil everything? The thirsty tramp would not ask anything from the spring but the delicious sense of its waters. His thirst and itself are the best reasons of all. The elemental is the height and depth of the world, and you can never go below it. Why not let us take things for what they are?"

For an instant a bold speech fluttered on his tongue; then he changed it somewhat. "If it were always possible," he said—"for instance, in the matter of women!"

Perhaps she didn't understand and perhaps she did. "The men we like best," she put in, turning to him gravely, "are the men who dare the impossible."

Yet he did not dare his. She had taught him to talk—but she was so utterly superb that day that even a now unordinary young minister's heart simply caught in his throat.

Then, there was the constant variety of her, the casual physical communion in the lingering touches of hands, the adorable movement of a woman's

breathing at close range—and the light that needs must grow in the eyes of the artist gazing on the work taking character beneath her hand. It was a light not fully revealed, of course, but there were exquisite flashes of it—such flashes as blind a man, yet say nothing definite of a woman.

There were a thousand things. Still, it all came to that night when at Mrs. Kenrose's gate she offered him the cigarette between two dainty fingers, saying she liked to see a man smoke as much as she didn't a woman, and saying also that she had rolled it herself. Perhaps there was a great deal more behind than the mischief in her eyes—because one of the points of that orthodox sermon of his had been on the evils of smoking. Perhaps she knew if he were to stand with her there must be a cleavage somewhere, and in this small way she was really testing him in bigger things. At any rate, it was the look she gave him that kept the cigarette in his mouth when the two suddenly appeared out of the dark coming down the sidewalk toward them. What brought them there at such a time was a question, indeed. Keswick and the other elder almost paused in the stare they gave them, and made no answer whatever to the young minister's "Good night." When they came back a minute later, Keswick turned to state in a cold voice that there was to be a meeting of the directors and they would like him to attend.

The directors had met before when

the other man had gone his way. Granton watched them disappear, grinding the stub of his cigarette beneath his foot. The woman was studying his face. Then, after a short silence, she declared her intention of going in—and he left her with a faint good-bye and a sort of drooped look.

Down the walk to the house she turned to gaze back at him. "I was beginning to think so well of him," she mused. "What a man he might be! But I guess he's got it in his blood."

Granton spent a bad night of it. But the meeting of the directors was not held. That following evening he went to the Keswicks' and asked Laura to be his wife. It was so sudden, so unexpected, she pleaded—but she consented. For a lover he came home unusually early and sat upon the doorstep, his chin in his hands.

As an ordinary young minister he had saved everything—yes, everything—these things for which he had lived and they had attempted to snatch from him. Yet the atmosphere held a sense of suffocation—worse, of a suffocation to which he must inevitably get accustomed and forget; the church rising in the moonlight was monumental. Yet why should it? It represented his congregation, and they—did they not represent everything?

From the upstairs window of the adjoining house there floated a voice in song—a woman's voice and an old love ballad. And the ordinary young minister's head sank deep in his hands.



A BENEFACTOR

OLD PHILOSOPHER—And so you have never married?

YOUNG PHILOSOPHER—No. When I was young I often said I would make one woman happy, but—

OLD PHILOSOPHER (*interrupting*)—And no doubt you have, son! No doubt you have!

A MAN, A GIRL, AND A CURL

By CELIA MYROVER ROBINSON

ON the rack it hung all day,
Near the ribbons bright and gay
And the ties,
But at night among her tresses,
When she wore her pretty dresses
In the guise
Of a bud of fashion's choosing,
It was really quite amusing,
Such sad sighs
The little curl would hear
Whispered in a pretty ear.
And the lies
(To make a ringlet tremble in surprise)
Of the crimson of her lips
And the crimson of her cheeks,
That lay all dây
In an alabaster box
On the dresser, with the locks
Not far away,
And near it, on the side,
Peroxide!
When the ringlet heard him whisper
That he never could resist her,
All the beauty of her bloom
And of her charm,
The ringlet lost its grip
And suddenly let slip
To his arm,
Where it fell, a golden wave,
And, trying quick to save
It from harm,
The maiden lost her head,
And bitter tears she shed
In her alarm.
The sudden heavy shower
Washed the color, like a flower,
From her cheeks.
And that's the reason why
Now he's very, very shy
When he calls
Upon the pretty lasses,
And always wears his glasses
To the balls.

A LITERARY CONVERSATION

By THOMAS L. MASSON

SCENE: *A den. Two girls, with a box of chocolate creams between them, are sitting together.*

FIRST GIRL—What did you bring in with you? I thought I saw a book.

SECOND GIRL—You did. It's called "Orthodoxy," by—by—

"Oh, I know! Chesterton. He's good."

"You've read him, then?"

"I tried to, but you know it isn't a story."

"Yes, I know, but he's awfully bright."

"Awfully. Then, you can read in it anywhere—that's an advantage. I've been reading O. Henry."

"I must, too. They say he's good."

"Not so good as I expected, after hearing him praised. Then, I don't like short stories. I revel in Chambers, don't you?"

"No; I detest him. I much prefer Oppenheim—he writes real stories. By the way, did you read Winston Churchill's 'Jethro Bass'?"

"I should say not! I hate politics. Have another?"

"Thanks. I've made myself sick already. I was looking over Gertrude Atherton's 'Gorgeous Isle' the other day. Have you seen it?"

"Is she a woman or a man? No, I haven't. Is it good?"

"Oh, I don't know. I never read things by women, and one has to be so careful, don't you know, because so many of them sign men's names. Yes, she's a woman, of course. You ought to know about her. I was reading the other day. She travels all over for plots."

"Um. Wasn't 'Somehow Good' fine!"

"Great! And 'Alice For Short'."

"Perfectly dandy. He's a splendid writer. Reminds me so of Dickens. When did you read them?"

"Oh, my dear, don't ask me *that!* That's too personal. But I haven't finished them yet, you know."

"Neither have I. I never expect to. He is so long. But, of course, he's great."

"Splendid! I know enough to talk about them."

"That's all you need. Did you read 'The Fruit of the Tree'?"

"Oh, yes. That's the only book, or perhaps I ought to say hers are the only books by a woman that one ought to read."

"You forgot Elinor Glyn."

"So I did, of course. But I didn't like it, did you?"

"What are you talking about—'The Fruit of the Tree' or 'Three Weeks'?"

"I don't think it makes much difference. But it was awful, wasn't it?"

"Simply awful. I fairly reveled in it. I had it hidden in my closet for a week."

"So did I. Well, I must be going."

"Don't hurry."

"I'm not, but some men are coming to call, and I suppose I must entertain them the best I can."

"No trouble about that. You are so bright."

"Ah, my dear, but they are Americans, and you know the American men never read anything, never do anything to improve themselves!"

"They wouldn't understand a word you said if you should talk as we've been talking."

"I know it. But one has—"

"Oh, certainly, of course! My dear, I feel for you. Think of me lying here reading Harold McGrath, while you—"

"Don't! Don't! It's too much."

(They kiss and part.)



WHY IT SHRIEKED

"**D**ID you hear the shriek that engine gave as it flew by?" asked the first man, as they approached a railroad crossing.

"Yes. What caused it?" rejoined his companion.

"I presume the engineer had it by the throttle."



FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

By CHESTER WOOD

SHE looked at him with eyes of glee
And answered with a laugh,
When he had said, "Oh, will you be
From henceforth all the world to me?"
"That's quite impossible, you see,
But I will be your better half."
She looked at him with eyes of glee
And answered with a laugh.



A FOOL'S only teacher arrives too late. Her name is Consequences.

THE FORELOCK OF TIME

By REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

For Occasion hath all her hair on her forehead; when she is past, you may not recall her. She has left no tuft whereby you can lay hold on her, for she is bald on the hinder part of her head, and she never returneth again.

—FRANCOIS RABELAIS.

I HAD been waiting quite some time for Ruth. She was to have been ready at seven-thirty, and it was now five minutes after eight; but I had waited without murmur, because the opera was to be "Aida," and Ruth loves Verdi, and I love Ruth. Nevertheless, I am not one of those Miltonians who like to serve by the simple recipe of "only stand and wait," and I had just begun to feel that such a delay needed some excuse. I was hungry for an accounting.

I got it. Ruth no sooner crossed the study threshold than her tardiness was quite adequately explained. She had left me to my wine at the early dinner table with the hair of a Priscilla—the center part, the modest knot, the almost severe withdrawal from a placid brow. But now she had returned bearing upon her scalp one of those arrangements that society reporters rightly call "creations"—with puffs and fluffs, rolls and waves, surf and breakers. It had upon me the creepy effect of a once familiar object turned suddenly strange; more than anything else, it was like your own name when for the first time you see it set forth with the flourishes and curly cues of a curbstone card writer.

"Have I kept you long?" asked Ruth.

She knew quite well, of course, that she had kept me long, but I answered only:

"I wanted to treat you as Thales of Miletus advises us to treat Time."

"Yes?" said Ruth, raising her eyebrows—and she has wonderful eyebrows—in a manner that, with her, means: "I haven't the remotest idea what you are driving at."

"I wanted to take you by the forelock," I explained, and I looked hard at that "creation."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Ruth, and patted the front elevation of her coiffure.

"Heaven," I subjoined, as I hurried her into the long waiting "taxi," "supplied your excuse when it ordained Peter Gilchrist."

Ruth frowned, which is something that her school teachers never permitted her to do.

"I thought," said she, "that it was Verdi who composed 'Aida.'"

"It was," I granted.

"Then what," she inquired, as we started toward the Manhattan Opera House, "did Peter Gilchrist compose?"

There you have it again—the instability of fame! To be sure, it was only that afternoon that I myself had come across Peter in a dusty corner of our branch of the Public Library; but I drew forth from my pocket the little volume of advice by that eighteenth-century hairdresser, and switching upon its preface the pocket flashlamp that we use to follow our opera scores, I read to her:

"The hair is certainly one of the greatest exterior ornaments which Nature hath bestowed on the human species. It seems somewhat strange, therefore, that no publication hath ever appeared to direct the management and preservation of it."

"I don't see," said Ruth, "how that applies."

"It applies," I answered, "because this volume justifies by precedent the 'rats' that it has just taken you so long to arrange."

"Nonsense!" said Ruth. "'Rats' are a new fashion."

But from that volume of 1768 I read:

"If a lady's hair be thin, pin an *addition* at the top with two blanket pins, and comb it down, and it will intermix and do up with the same ease as if it were all natural growth. I command to you: No. 1, a plain, straight border to wear over the hair, shading in the middle; No. 2, a thin border of natural hair, not shaded in the middle, when some choose a small curl to fill up the vacant part behind the ear."

"Janice Meredith!" gasped Ruth.

I read on, skipping a few sentences:

"No. 4, a row of dropping-curled hair, which some for warmth have made upon a caul; and No. 11, puffs, pompons, etc., made in different forms to fancy, of which there is a great variety, too tedious to mention."

"Your friend Peter," said Ruth, "seems to have known a good deal about the hair, considering his date."

Seventeen sixty-eight—why, Gilchrist was a modern! Ever since we began to walk upright and lose the hair from our backs, mankind has been using the hair on his head for the material of elaborate design. As my "taxi" whirred through the New York streets, I recalled how, in a Capetown highway last year, I saw Zulu warriors with curious rings of short, curling locks stiffened with gum to stand erect like coronets. Primitive peoples have always used long hair as a decoration, and short hair they have even lengthened by art or artifice. To the average eye, the hair is the essential beauty of the body, and the savage arm directs its blows against the head rather than against the heart. Did not our own Indians scalp the conquered foe and proudly wear the hairy proof of victory?

I glanced again at Ruth's "creation."

The monuments of Assyria testify to the vast amount of time that, even then, was spent with the *coiffeur*.

There are wigs in the British Museum, Egyptian wigs, covered with innumerable short curls, below which descend long lines of plaited hair with a ringlet at each end—and there is scarce a pigtail in Chinatown that is not half horse-hair! The splendid hair daggers of today have their prototype in the golden pin which Judith fastened in her locks when she made that fatal call upon Holofernes, and, if Samson lost his strength with the ply of Delilah's shears, the men of ancient Gaul esteemed the same act a heavy punishment, and their neighbors across the Channel might rob an enemy of his powers could they but steal upon him in the night and clip a single curl.

Some day somebody will write a mighty book upon the vanishing locks of the race. He will quote the volumes that the poets have made upon their sweethearts' tresses; he will reprint in color the braids that Titian loved and the strands that Vandyke painted; he will even be psychologist enough to make clear the lure of raven hair for the blond Vikings sailing the Southern seas and the goad of yellow for the sun-brown races of the Mediterranean coasts; and in his history he will tell how Helen's hair

"... launched a thousand ships,
And wrecked the topless towers of Ilium";

how Cleopatra's strangled the Triumvirate; how that of one Italian princess wove a net for the Medici, and that of Russia's Catherine bound fast the empire of the White Czar.

I have said "the vanishing locks of the race," and I have said it advisedly. Herbert Spencer and the other anti-vaccinationists declare that when vaccine came in, hair and teeth began to go out, and that, though "hair growers" antedate smallpox, neither the elixirs of the Phoenicians nor the "sure cures" of America can now permanently postpone the inevitable departure. Yet, so long as two or three hairs are gathered together, mankind will endeavor to decorate them.

As we entered the Opera House that evening, Ruth and I, even in the semi-

darkness of the auditorium I realized first not the music of that scarlet overture, but the black and gold checkerboard of enormous *coiffures*. Here, in the boxes, was the legitimate descendant of that xanthic miter which Hector's Andromache wears in the sixth book of the "Iliad," and all about us in the stalls glittered the evolutionary result of those pearl-studded pins, ivory and silver, and those wonderful golden grasshoppers that the Athenian women wore in time of festival. One's eye had to travel to the gallery to find the likeness of the Greek ladies of the highest rank, who "forgot not the rules of simplicity in the adornment of their hair," or the beautiful Berenice, whose "ringlets were bound only with a ribbon of purple"—

"Tresses that wear
Jewels, but to declare
How much themselves more precious are."

"Anyhow," interrupted Ruth, "the men would do it if they dared."

"They couldn't," I answered; "and as long ago as the fourth century, B.C., the sculptors, careful as they were about the braids of their women, were content to show only the shape of the heads of their men."

Beware of the feminine memory! "You yourself once told me," Ruth retorted, "that two hundred years later the Greek athletes wore crimped hair—marcelled—with rows of corkscrew curls."

"I may have said that; I probably did. But along with those facts, the hair historian will note the even greater importance of hair in the life of Rome. When, with Æneas, empire moved westward from the Ægean to the Tiber, it left Queen Dido clipping her own hair in sacrifice to Iris in order that she might die, and it soon established a whole code of arborescent law and custom for the women of Rome. The matron must wear her hair parted, yet, when the bride was made ready for marriage, the parting must be made not by the thenceforth customary *discriminalis*, or needle, but by a warrior's spear, in order that she might bear courageous sons. It was duly decreed

that intending hairdressers must serve a long apprenticeship before they might set up shop on their own account—a provision that, I doubt not, the Suffragettes will soon enact in America—and though Martial speaks of her who 'but now a swan, becomes suddenly a crow,' and though the royal Messalina covered her raven head with a yellow *gallereus*—to prevent nocturnal recognition in the Roman streets—the Conscript Fathers had succinctly forbidden the use of the wig."

"The men wore them as much as the women," prompted Ruth.

It was during an *entr'acte* that I had called forth this reproof, and I tried to proceed without noticing it. But Ruth also knows her Martial. She quoted:

"With the aid of unguents, you make false hair, and your unclean pate is covered with dyed locks. There is no need of a hairdresser; a sponge, Phœbus, would do the business better."

I coughed—it is not my fault if my hair is going—and I waited until the recurring music drowned the continuance of my reflections. Privately, it had always struck me as thoughtful of the Roman sculptors to have provided for many of their female statues removable scalps—some even of different colors—so that, as fashions changed in the living world, the ladies of marble, supplied with varying *coiffures*, might never seem behind the time of those who look at them.

And change the fashions certainly did. As the Republic declined, the hair rose. The "rats" did not leave the sinking ship; they sought it. Ere Caesar fell, at least three slaves were needed for the arrangement of a patrician woman's locks—one to curl, a second to perfume and the third to adjust. It was something like a modern surgical operation with its anesthetizer, its veteran wielder of the scalpel and the young interne, who does the casual sewing up. Small wonder that the results were called *calienda*, when such a tower added a cubit to the wearer's stature, and smaller wonder that, to hold in place the *caliendum* of Mark Antony's wife, there was a pin strong

enough to pierce, in the hands of Flavia, the tongue of that dead Cicero who had maligned her husband.

"Even the clergy used to wear long hair," insisted Ruth, for now another act had come and gone.

"It was Pope Anicetus who forbade it," I replied; "and since then the male members of the laity have regularly sought the shears."

"You forget the gentlemen of the Restoration," argued Ruth.

"Wigs," I answered. "They survive today in English barristers."

"I told you the men wore them! But how do you account for pig-tailed Nelson?"

"They didn't carry a barber on a man-of-war in those days."

I dismissed the digression with a shrug, and my mind harked to the ladies of the French aristocracy just before the Revolution, when one mode took the form of an arrangement of the hair, all wire and curls, the model of a frigate under full sail. I saw the fashion plates of the First Empire, and I remembered the story of the ill-starred Eugénie's appearance at a bullfight before her marriage to Louis Napoleon, "her head crowned only by its broad golden plaits, interwoven with pearls."

"I'm sure that was simplicity," said Ruth.

I nodded.

"Her hair is bound with myrtle leaves, Green leaves upon her golden hair!"

I quoted in mock approval. "You forget that some Orthodox Jewish women today shave their heads in token of submission to their husbands, and then cover the spot with hempen wigs. Oh, no; savages make strange hairdressers, but strange hairdresses do not make savages."

In fact, we bid fair to go the ancients better at their own game. Where Judith used a single hairpin, Ruth, on Opera night, uses five hundred; the American woman of fashion devotes a twelfth of her waking hours to the dressing and redressing of her hair. Let the Chinese crew of a Pacific merchantman mutiny, as they did recently, at the knowledge that the hair of a

Celestial empress was sailing in their ship for use in American "switches"—Imperial Woman must still be served!

She wears thick, fuzzy "rats" half a yard long, hot and unsanitary, or wiry "rats" with springs in them, that every time the wind blows show like barbed wire fences over her ears. For anywhere from two to ten dollars she can get a "ready made crown" of puffs and curls, attachable in two minutes, and unless caught by an unobserving umbrella on a rainy street, to all appearances native to her own scalp.

"And there's no sense in taking a long time in arranging it," said Ruth. "If you are not a millionairess, thirty minutes or an hour at from fifty cents to a dollar will be all the time you need spend at the hairdresser's for a single visit. Once after a session there I even slept overnight without taking down my hair—I just left it in the net and combed around the edges in the morning. Some girls"—and her voice dropped to a horrified whisper—"some girls leave it up for three or four days."

And then, forgetful of her recent delay, "I can fix my own hair in ten minutes," she proudly continued. "I just brush it from the crown, fasten tightly all the way around my head the 'rat' that you call a 'boa constrictor,' brush back my hair over the boa, knot the ends at the top or back of my head and pin on the puffs and curls."

"And then?" I asked.

"Then?" repeated Ruth. "Why, that's all!"

Again I opened the immortal Gilchrist and read this paragraph:

"Where the face is large in diameter the hair ought to be dressed high and forward, which takes off the masculine look. For the small face, it ought to be close at the edge and rise gradually, ending in a peak. For a long visage, it ought to be dressed rather flat at the top and low at the ears, to swell at the temples."

Ruth nodded assent.

"No wonder," I concluded, "that the feminine skull contains such an illogical labyrinth of gray matter within, when it has without such serpentine intricacies of black or red, of brown or yellow!"

"Nonsense!" said Ruth. "I could make out just as strong a case against the beards of men—"

I stroked my shaven chin.

"—or the lack of them," she ended.

"But beards," I began, "are a masculine—"

"Hush!" said Ruth.

And that last word of argument proved unanswerable; for the curtain was rising and there, in their living tomb, the stage Aida and her lover were always more real to both of us than false fronts or wired curls.



LOVE UP TO DATE

(A Sonnet in Dialogue)

By WILLIS LEONARD CLANAHAN

HE

DID I but dare, I know I'd love you dearly.

SHE

If you were brave, you would not falter so.

HE

Your lovely presence sets my heart aglow.

SHE

And yet it seems to agitate you, merely.

HE

Nay—more than that! 'Twill be my death, or nearly!

SHE

Your mood is not indicative of woe.

HE

How little of my mood you seem to know!

SHE

Do you believe that you could love sincerely?

HE

Do I believe? Oh, if you would but try me!

SHE

What is there, pray, to hinder such a thing?

HE

Should I attempt it, then, would you deny me?

SHE

Should I consent, and Cupid have his fling—

HE

A thousand kisses could not satisfy me!

SHE

Ah, this expression has the proper ring!

HUMAN MOLECULES

By MARY BROWN MESNY

MAN is like one of those infinitesimal bodies that form the basis of all chemical substances. He is nothing more nor less than a human molecule or atom.

He has various bonds of affinity, satisfied and unsatisfied. If his bonds of affinity are not met by the affinities of some other molecule, he is apt to be a very unstable chemical.

It is possible for a human atom with six bonds of affinity to tie himself to another atom with only one bond, but he is not a very permanent element, and his other five bonds are always ready for other combinations.

How unfortunate it is not to be able to satisfy all normal bonds!

The big atom with many bonds of affinity is often unhappy. He is termed eccentric and his temperament is called artistic. The little atom with only one or two bonds wonders why he is not contented.

Sometimes man is content with one other atom, and then again he has several bonds, and needs about half a dozen sympathetic atoms.

Oxygen, hydrogen, carbon and all the rest have certain bonds of affinity—frequently one, often two or more.

However, the atom of oxygen is somehow destined to meet its inevitable atom of hydrogen. A beautiful drop of dew is the result.

It is a happy thought that certain lovely combinations are foreordained, and that these human atoms often meet their mates. *

Such is the atomic theory of life.



THE world measures success by our achievements, happiness by our mercenary possessions; but in the absence of contentment, the world's judgment proves merely an optical illusion.



A FLIRT is a body of femininity entirely surrounded by men.

THE TORCH

By FANNY HEASLIP LEA

"I DON'T think," said Mrs. Pennington slowly and with a controlled movement of dry, unwilling lips, "that you quite understand me."

Her husband looked back at her from across the hearth grimly, not caring to conceal his incredulous displeasure.

"I don't think," he assented chillingly, "that I do."

He folded the newspaper he had been reading and laid it down upon the library table with the unconscious method that was a part of the man, then put cool finger tips together and inspected his wife deliberately through gold-rimmed eyeglasses, as if she had been some new and undesirable kind of visitor.

"What," he asked finally, "are you talking about? Do you know, yourself?"

"Quite well," Mrs. Pennington answered without resentment. "I know quite well what I am talking about. Do you want me to say it all again? Is that necessary?"

Her tired blue eyes, faded somewhat grayly from their first clearness, yet gave back his look with an undaunted purpose, and the soft, indecisive mouth set itself in sterner lines. In the lap of her quiet, neutral-colored gown, her little roughened hands folded themselves tightly, asking strength from each other.

"Shall I tell you again?" she insisted with a kind of gentle stubbornness.

Mr. Pennington's answer was the exaggeration of courtesy. "If you will be so good."

Mrs. Pennington drew a long breath and her muscles grew tense. "I want to go away," she said doggedly; "that is all there is to it. I want to go away."

"You mean, I suppose, a visit to some of your people."

She shook her head, setting her teeth on her lips' unsteady treachery.

"I want to leave you—you know what I mean."

"I do not," Mr. Pennington denied with some irritation. "I have not the remotest idea, Louisa—and that phrase has a very unpleasant significance. Please do not use it again. It is generally associated with scandals and the divorce court."

"But that is what I mean," Mrs. Pennington persisted. "I want a separation."

She did not lift her eyes from the cheerful fire in the grate until the burden of silence stifled her and set little frightened pulses twitching in throat and brow.

"That is what I mean," she repeated bravely, and looked across into her husband's startled face.

He sat aghast, regarding her, speechless, chill eyes lit with a flame of incredulity, thin mouth weakening to an unuttered exclamation. While their glances crossed, a dull, angry red rose to his brow and suffused the roots of his scant, dark hair.

Twice he opened his mouth and snapped it shut, with a futility of expression that woke a mad desire for laughter in the woman before him, evolving inadequate speech at last in a voice keyed curiously higher than his wont.

"Well," he jerked out baldly, "upon my word!"

Mrs. Pennington waited in silence for a more definite answer. She did not look like a woman to fight her way out of the rut, but her eyes were very steady, and they did not fall before the man's dazed, furious look.

He pulled himself together presently with an obvious effort, stiffening his face almost to its accustomed, controlled mask and settling his glasses with a hand that shook slightly.

"So you want a—a separation?" he observed, failing a little in his endeavor of toneless detachment. There was amazement and a throbbing anger in his voice.

"You have a reason, I suppose, for this remarkable statement?"

"Yes," she said quietly, "yes—I have a great many reasons, Mr. Pennington."

"I should like," he demanded, "to hear one of them—one of these amazing reasons of yours—that would justify such an appalling step."

In the firelight, that showed pitifully plain the little lines about her eyes and the deep, strained furrows on either side of her mouth, Mrs. Pennington essayed to smile.

"If you will only not look at it in that way," she said with an incongruous gentleness. "I have no wish to affront you or hurt you. This is not a crazy impulse on my part; it is an old determination. There are a great many things that—that are concerned in it."

"A great many— Oh, talk sense!" said Mr. Pennington brusquely. "I should like to get to the bottom of this, if you please." He beat an intolerant tattoo with the knuckles of one hand upon the palm of the other.

"You would have a long way to go," answered his wife slowly, "but I think I can tell you—if you will let me. There is no reason, is there, why we shouldn't talk it over impartially?"

Mr. Pennington leaned back in his chair, gripping the arms of it with wiry, nervous hands. He stared gloomily into the fire with unbelieving eyes.

"Go on," he commanded, "for God's sake! After twenty years—this melodrama!"

The woman's clasped hands tightened breathlessly, every muscle of her body rallying to the strain she had set upon herself.

"This melodrama, as you choose to call it"—she struck the first note of resentment—"is nothing new. Only, you haven't seen it before. It had a beginning—seventeen years ago. You remember Dorothy's first birthday?"

"I remember nothing."

"Then I can tell you. The night of Dorothy's first birthday—we had been married three years—we quarreled—do you remember now?"

She waited a moment, but he did not answer.

"I don't mean that the quarrel was everything. It was only the—the culmination. It was a small thing, perhaps, but it came after a great many other small things—"

She fumbled a moment carefully for words, her inner consciousness a pitiful blur of struggling days and anguished nights. "It came after a great many other small things," she repeated, as if to gain time, groping her way cautiously.

"It is incredible," Mr. Pennington began angrily, yet with a sort of dazed endeavor to follow. She interrupted him swiftly.

"If I were a witness, you'd let me tell what I knew. You can listen to other evidence—why not to mine? It's not easy for me to explain—" She broke off to begin again more calmly.

"I was very young, you know, when you married me, and very sensitive. I didn't know then a great many things that I have learned since. I thought the world was just what it looked like always, and what the poets and musicians and the painters made it out to be. I had been kept carefully all my life inside a kind of fence, where horrible things and wicked things"—she flung out the next phrase desperately—"and *true* things—were not allowed to come. All I knew of life I had gotten from silly novels and poems, where

the wedding bells are the end of the story and marriage is never for anything else but love. Perhaps that made me stupid and slow to understand, but you were not too patient with me. It used to seem sometimes as if you didn't care, having once gotten me for your wife, whether you kept my—my love—or not. I was just a fact in your life, like the breakfast table or the evening paper. You didn't have to win me; I was there—just a matter of course, like everything else in the house—fires and meals and furniture."

Mr. Pennington moved and frowned irritably.

"This is the sheerest sentimentality," he said. "I asked for a reason."

"I am trying to show you," she defended, not yielding an inch, though a slow, painful flush belied her control. "Can't you see what a difference there was in everything to me? I had been poetic and idealistic and—foolish. Life meant a thing to be softened and made beautiful and uplifted. When you said—when you asked me to marry you, I cried half the night for happiness, and I prayed—prayed, mind you—beside my bed, with my face hidden, that I might make myself what you believed and wanted me to be. Well, I have been a good housekeeper—I suppose my prayer was answered."

She hurried on before his impatient protest.

"What I mean is that I married you, expecting things that never happened. And others that did happen I had not dreamed of. Most people are like that, I suppose; but when they love each other it's worth while—they can stand the mistakes and the clashes. You didn't care for me—after you married me—enough to smooth things over. And you were always clever; there was nothing too bitter for you to say to me when I failed to meet your requirements."

"You spoke of a quarrel," said Mr. Pennington coldly. "This other, I imagine, is every man's and every woman's experience. A woman can

always see a tragedy in the commonplace, so long as it concerns herself."

His wife did not look at him. She waited a moment, seeing in a dim, visioned space those earlier days of sordid disillusion—her hopeless wrestling for adjustment of Life and the Dream.

"I don't know," she said at last quietly, "whether you will see any better when I remind you of the quarrel. I told you it was nothing of consequence to *you*. We had been talking of something you wished me to do—there was a business man in town who could be of use to you, and you wanted me to call on his wife. I was timid, foolishly, of course, and I didn't want to go. Do you remember the discussion?"

"Not in the least," he denied grimly. "I must say it all seems very absurd to me. I may be prejudiced."

"You said," she prompted carefully, "that you had expected me to be a help, not a hindrance. You were very angry about it. You said that you were sick of my childishness—that you had stood a great deal of it—and that, apparently, I realized no obligation whatsoever. You asked me at last, after a great many other unkind things, what I supposed you had married me for."

She stopped with a little breathless catch in her voice, then went on again, always quietly, even with a sort of detached exactness.

"I said for love, I supposed—and you laughed. That was very nearly unpardonable. Then you lighted a cigar, I remember quite distinctly, and as you threw the match away you said"—she quoted clearly—"Don't be absurd! You talk like a schoolgirl. There are bigger things in the world than sentiment. Of course, a man's affection for his wife is always a consideration, but in sheer justice there are certain other things she owes him in return for his name and support: the care of his home, and so on. That's common sense. All love is material—to be absolutely frank about it. Marriage involves so much for so much.

You ought to have sense enough to know that—”

He would have interrupted now, but she silenced him with one outthrust hand. Memory came back to him slowly. She saw it in his changing face—at the sound of those unlovely words drawn up before him, the ghosts of a long dead anger.

“Oh, I know you were infuriated. You said more than you meant to, perhaps. I had irritated you. But even so, no circumstances under heaven—Can’t you see? Can’t you? Can’t you see it was like the end of everything for me? You had taken everything I had to give, and you considered that you were paying for it with your name and support! You degraded me—unspeakably. But it made things plain to me—the horrible mistake I had made. I couldn’t love you after that. You had better have struck me in the face.”

“Absurd!” he muttered.

“Not so very absurd, after all,” said little Mrs. Pennington gently. “A girl who isn’t very old and hasn’t had very many lovers is easily mistaken, I suppose. There are so many things that look like love—how is she to know, until her hands are tied? But once she knows the mistake, she can never go back.”

She hurried a little before the intolerant scorn of his look. “It had seemed a very fine thing to be loved, to be engaged. I was proud of you, and of your good looks—and your success. I was proud of myself because you wanted me. I was not so proud when I learned the truth. It was not me that you wanted—especially, only a wife. It happened that I came in your way just then.

“Anyhow”—she stumbled, losing her control a little before the cold reproach of his eyes—“I made a mistake. I should never have known it if you hadn’t shown me. I wanted to go back to my mother, then, but Dorothy cried in the next room, and she was only a baby—my baby—so I stayed. I couldn’t leave her, and I knew you wouldn’t let me take her

away. I didn’t say anything more to you, but that night, after I had cried myself still, I made myself a promise—that I would leave you as soon as Dorothy should be old enough not to need me. I saved my self-respect that way.”

She stopped, twisting a handkerchief drawn from her belt between chill, nervous fingers.

“Dorothy was eighteen last week—and I am not going to wait any longer. I have waited seventeen years already; that is quite a long time, you see.”

“I see,” said Mr. Pennington drily when she had done. “You have endured your married life for twenty years, and at this late date it becomes intolerable to you. That is very strange.”

“Not strange at all,” she insisted, pitifully firm. “You don’t seem to understand. I have endured it because I meant to free myself in the end. I did it for Dorothy—can’t you see? She has never known that there was anything wrong. A child has to have its ideals to begin on, and Dorothy has had hers intact—I’ve seen to that. She hasn’t guessed that there was ever anything wrong. She doesn’t know that there is not the most perfect sympathy between us. A child is at such a horrible disadvantage when its parents are—when they do not agree. I have saved her that.”

She strained her clenched fingers against each other and looked at him almost pleadingly.

“I am not hating you for it,” she explained hopelessly. “I am not even reproaching you. But don’t you think when I tell you that I have waited seventeen years for Dorothy’s sake—that for seventeen years I have wanted to be free—don’t you think you might let me go—quietly?”

Her hushed, earnest voice sounded distinctly through the still warm room, above the little homelike noises of dropping coals and the clock ticking on the mantel.

“I do not suppose,” said Mr. Pennington carefully, “that any man was

ever forced to listen to such a diatribe before."

"There are a great many things," Mrs. Pennington replied with a wistful, unconscious humor, "that men are not forced to listen to—when they should be. I'm sorry."

"Sorry!" he retorted contemptuously. "I am amazed—absolutely amazed! After all this time—do you expect me to believe that you have had this thing in your mind for seventeen years?"

"I have just told you so."

"Seventeen years, in which you have kept my house, brought up my child and borne my name—without a protest."

"The laborer," Mrs. Pennington defended, "is worthy of his hire. I have earned my keep, I think."

"That is not," said Mr. Pennington disgustedly, "a very refined nor edifying way of expressing it."

Mrs. Pennington smiled with difficulty, and a little wryly. "You are inconsistent," she objected softly. "It is not, to my mind, a very refined or edifying thing to express, but you taught it to me yourself."

They looked at each other a moment in silence, measuring swords, as it almost seemed, and the man's look wavered first. He shifted in his chair and turned eyes of concentrated bitterness upon the flame.

"You did not expect the moonshine to outlast the first twelvemonth?" he offered, something in his tone and look nearing a compromise. "I thought you had better sense. Marriage is a sensible, ordinary institution for everyday people—not a romance."

"I know what marriage is now," she said very quietly.

"I have not stinted you in money, clothes, things about the house."

"You have paid your bills," she agreed. "They were not overdrawn."

He faced her suddenly, his mouth working, his control sapped by her dogged resistance.

"You have seemed to be satisfied," he broke out huskily. "You have not objected to me and my ways. We have lived very peacefully together—"

"Because you have had your will in everything."

"Whatever the reason, we *have* lived peaceably. In heaven's name, what possesses you now? You have kept quiet all these years—"

"That was for Dorothy," she reiterated, steadfastly returning his look.

Presently he got to his feet and paced the floor, lashed by a resistless realization of the will beneath her gentle surface. She sat still, looking into the fire and waiting.

"You have no right to ask this thing," he said at last, halting beside the table. "I suppose you know that."

"Then I shall not ask it," she returned stubbornly. "I shall simply tell you what I am going to do."

He took up his restless stride again, flinging over his shoulder a barbed shaft that struck and quivered in the wound it made.

"What about Dorothy now?"

Dorothy's mother went white after a very ghastly fashion, drawing the back of her hand across eyes that strove to see clearly.

"It is selfish of me," she said after a little—"do you think I don't know?—horribly selfish. You can tell me nothing like that that I have not seen. I do not for a moment defend myself"—the slow voice trembled—"but I cannot change. I have a right to *something* out of my life, and I am going to have it. Dorothy is a woman now. And she need not learn the truth all at once. I can go away, and she must gradually realize that I am not coming back. When she was born I was no older than Dorothy is today. She is old enough to understand. I have not been selfish all my life, but all my life I have been unhappy. Now, I am going to try the other way. I know what I am doing. You cannot stop me."

"It makes no difference, I suppose, that you will be giving her name to the public for a football?"

"Hardly that," said Mrs. Pennington with a tired little movement of one hand. "It isn't uncommon nowadays

for women to leave their husbands. I'm afraid I can't change. You see, I have been waiting such a long time."

Mr. Pennington came back to the fireplace and stood there, frowning coldly.

"If I could see your point of view," he began, "I might hope to understand you. As it is, I can make nothing out of your explanation beyond the fact that seventeen years ago, by way of an absurd and trivial dispute, you found that you did not—er—care for me, and, as a result, you wish to leave me now. Why, I cannot see. I do not ask any youthful absurdities in the matter of emotion. A calm, unexacting affection is all that is expected of people of your age and mine. As I said before, we are past the time of moonshine, my dear"—he frowned, because she winced at that—"and, to the best of my knowledge, in these last seventeen years which figure so conspicuously in your remarks, we have been very comfortable."

Mr. Pennington ceased. He had once been referred to as the coolest, most level-headed lawyer in his town, and he was apt in didactic movements to be sustained by the remembrance. He was therefore the more startled and discomfited by the flame that lighted his wife's face beneath his eyes to scorn, and white, despairing rage.

She slipped to her feet and stood by the table, one hand on its green-covered surface, the other at her trembling throat.

"Comfortable!" she cried almost in a whisper. "Comfortable!"

He stirred uneasily beneath the flick of her contempt.

"You think it is comfortable to find out at nineteen that you have married a man who does not love you—and live with him till you are thirty-six? I was sixteen when I married you—a child, that's all, just a child. And you have had all the best part of my life. What have I had? Nothing. What am I going to have? Myself. I'm not an old woman yet. I can go away and have a little house somewhere and work and sleep and rest—by myself.

There are hundreds of books I have never read, and there's music I've never heard—I sha'n't be lonely. And I can be honest. I'm so tired of pretending. I've been pretending for seventeen years."

It seemed incredible, in the accustomed quiet of the room, among all the familiar objects, with the paraphernalia of every day about her, that the little white-faced woman could change so suddenly and so vitally to a creature of flaming purpose. She would not even let him speak.

"I don't know," she said unevenly. "why girls aren't told the truth about things. My mother would have given her life for me—but she let me marry you, thinking love was the reason of everything. I had a world of pretty ideals—bubbles, that's all—and she never explained to me that I couldn't keep them. That's why it hurt so to have them broken. Isn't it strange—this thing of a girl's ideals? They're like a torch, the mother keeps burning for the daughter—the mother, who no longer herself believes in them. The torch is handed down from generation to generation—and in spite of it all the truth is always there, the truth that has got to be learned. If only they didn't teach us to expect so much, the disappointment would be easier."

She caught her breath sharply. "Anyhow, I can't pretend any longer—I'm too tired. I promised myself I'd be free—and I will. You mean nothing to me—less than nothing; and the whole world is welcome to know it!"

Her voice rose a little, shrilling above its soft, slow pitch, through unsteady lips that could not now control it.

"Hush!" said Mr. Pennington uneasily. He laid a hand on her arm, but she shook it off at once. "You are not yourself; you are hysterical."

"Is it any wonder?" She held herself fiercely quiet with the clasping hand at her throat, steadyng herself against the table. "There are times when I have felt as if I should scream it out to the people in the street—as if I didn't know the man whom I had

married at all—as if I had waked up some morning to find myself owned, body and soul, in the house of a stranger—”

“Sh-h!” said Mr. Pennington again. A look of nervous concern displaced the impassivity of his features. He drew a breath, almost of relief, at this simplifying of the situation. Feminine hysterics he could at least recognize and categorize.

“Don’t you think you’d better go to bed? You’re all unstrung. I dare say you’re run down, and your nerves are bad. You’ll think better of this in the morning. I’ll get Barton to give you a tonic. We won’t talk any more tonight.”

Mrs. Pennington controlled herself with a wrenching effect and turned away.

“You’re right,” she said wearily; “we won’t talk any more tonight. I don’t think I could stand it. But will you please think over what I’ve said? I’m not hysterical; I mean it.”

“You’ll change your mind,” said Pennington soothingly. He followed her to the door, humoring her with a magnanimous appreciation of his own handling of the situation.

“You’re nervous now and upset. I reproach myself for not having seen before that you were not well. I may have lost my temper and irritated you—but this is all a mistake. You’ll change your mind.”

“No,” said Mrs. Pennington slowly, “I think not.” She looked at him, and was disheartened by the uncomprehending indulgence in his face.

“It’s no use,” she murmured. “Please don’t come any farther. Good night.”

When she had gone a bare step or two away she turned back again, her look incredulous.

“You can’t possibly mean that you would *want* me to stay after what I have told you?”

“I know that you are not well,” he answered evasively, “and I make allowance for your nerves. We often say things in the heat of the moment—”

“So that is the way you prefer to put it!” She shook her head, her tired eyes giving him the lie direct. “In the heat of the moment one might, perhaps; not in the heat of seventeen years!”

From the landing of the stairway she looked down at him. He stood in the door, head bent, one nervous hand fumbling with his glasses, and while she watched he turned and went back into the library. She heard his chair drawn slowly to the hearth and the scrape of a lighted match.

Mrs. Pennington went on up the stairs and into her room at the end of the upper hall. There was a sudden and satisfying sense of achievement at her heart, although her hands were cold and her limbs quivered with the last surges of the emotion which had overswept her. While she undressed and let down the braids of her heavy, straight brown hair, her mind brooded over its new freedom with an access of exultation. After seventeen years she had spoken the truth; and tomorrow she would go away, possessing herself again. She had been strong to wait, and she would be strong in the fulfillment of her desire. Only to be alone, to be free, to be herself—that was little to ask of life. And there was no one who would be harmed by what she did. Her freedom would react on no one’s happiness. The man she called her husband had grown used to her presence in his house. He would as easily grow used to her absence. She owed him nothing—nothing but what she had paid—much unhappiness she had not paid. Dorothy—she would not think of Dorothy—she dared not. She swept the straight darkness of her hair down on either side of her face and brushed it lingeringly before the mirror. Her eyes looked back at her, clear but a little faded—they had been blue as gentians once. Above the straight, prim collar of her brown flannel dressing gown her neck showed overly slender, with betraying cords. Those lines about her mouth told the story of hot words bitten back, and a tired need for laughter. A rush of

stinging tears misted her sight, for sheer pity of the eager girl's face that no longer looked back to her from the mirror.

She had asked so much of life, that girl, and she had had so little.

Out of the half-twilight behind her in the glass a slim, small figure took gradual shape and blossomed. Wide blue eyes under a soft sweep of hair and a low white brow, a mouth that curved to a confident sweetness, cheeks carnationed, even in the shadow—Mrs. Pennington stared back at the girl face dumbly, drawing her hand across her eyes, her lips tremulous. It was the face her mirror used to yield her, but while she looked it rippled to a smile, and with a sweep of white silken skirts Dorothy crossed the room and stood behind her mother's chair.

"What are you looking at, darling?" she teased, linking bare white arms about her mother's neck. "Did you think I was a ghost?"

Mrs. Pennington shook her head. "You startled me," she said quietly, "only for a moment. Aren't you late coming up, Dolly? Has Mr. Hazelhurst just gone?"

"Only just," Dorothy answered with a quick little movement of embarrassment. "Let me brush your hair, mother—do. Give me the brush."

She bent her head above the brown, soft strands. "You have such pretty hair. It's much longer than mine—mother, dear."

"Yes?" said Mrs. Pennington abstractedly. She leaned back in her chair, relaxing wearily to the soft, regular sweep of the brush.

"When you were—that is—when you and father were first engaged," said Dorothy slyly after a little, "how old were you?"

"Sixteen. I was almost seventeen when we were married," her mother answered perfunctorily. Then some sympathetic current arrested her sharply. "Why?"

"Nothing," Dorothy protested. "Oh, nothing! He had only a small salary, hadn't he? I've heard him say so."

The face above the swiftly moving

hands flamed radiantly crimson, and the blue eyes shone through a happy mist.

"Why do you want to know?" repeated Mrs. Pennington nervously.

"I was just thinking," said Dorothy softly. "I suppose you all were frightfully happy— Turn your head a little. There! You went to housekeeping in a cottage, didn't you—all by your two selves? Did you have roses at the windows? And you used to wait by the fire for him in the evening, I suppose, didn't you?"

"Dorothy!" cried the mother, a sharp anguish in her voice. "Dorothy! What do you mean?"

"It must have been sweet," said Dorothy more softly yet. "Mother, dear—" She laid the brush upon a chair beside her and came around to stand before Mrs. Pennington, her rose-red face an open book to those aching eyes. "Mother, dear—" she murmured vaguely, then dropped to the floor and hid her face upon her mother's knee, shaken suddenly with long, quivering sobs.

"I'm so happy," she whispered with a little breathless catch of laughter in her tears. "I'm not crazy, mother—I'm just happy. I'm the happiest girl in the world!"

Mrs. Pennington bent low above the slim, shaken figure, holding it jealously close. "Dorothy," she said imperiously, "you must tell me! Don't cry so, darling. What is it you mean?"

She touched her lips again and again to the silken straight brown hair, whispering soft foolish phrases coined long ago for the baby in her arms.

"N-nothing," said Dorothy brokenly at last. She sat up straight, drawing back a little and smiling adorably through her tears. "I've just been promising to marry Dan, that's all—and I'm n-not used to it. It sort of startled me."

"Dan Hazelhurst!" The mother's cry was quick and low.

"Yes'm," said Dorothy, wiping her eyes with a damp little handkerchief. "You certainly must have known, mother, dear. You didn't suppose it could be anyone else, did you?"

"But, Dolly, my little girl, you are so young—so dreadfully young!"

Dorothy smiled wisely, patting her mother's knee. The April torrent of her tears had dried, and her eyes gleamed steadfastly bright again.

"Eighteen last week," she reminded proudly. "And you were only sixteen when you were married."

"I!" cried Mrs. Pennington sharply. A sudden baffled terror beat in her voice.

"And weren't you happy?" asked Dorothy with tremulous gaiety. "Weren't you just as happy as the day is long?"

Mrs. Pennington's lips were dry; she held them steady with cruel teeth. Seventeen years she had waited to speak the truth. What was it she had said so long ago in the library—mothers keeping afire for their daughters the ideals they, themselves, no longer believed in—if mothers taught us to expect less, the disappointment would be easier—always the truth had to come.

One throbbing moment she kept silence, her every instinct clamoring for the freedom she had waited so long to take; then she looked into the eager, glowing face at her knee, into the eyes straining for sight of that radiant future—and lied, as mothers have lied before her. After all, life might be kinder to this girl than it had been to that other one, and she dared not offer her sordid experience in place of this exquisite hope.

"Yes," she said slowly, "I suppose we were."

"Of course," said Dorothy confidently. "And so shall we be—mother, dear—isn't it wonderful?"

She talked on for a long time, in her soft, girlish treble, of Dan and Dan's future. It was lucky they had grown up together. There need be no tiresome question of waiting to know each other. Every thought of her fresh, happy heart mirrored itself before her mother's look, and the room was filled with the echo of hope that is the countersign of youth.

At last Mrs. Pennington rose and sent the girl away to bed. "There is

something I had forgotten to tell your father," she explained. "He is still reading in the library."

She clung to Dorothy for a moment with an inexplicable and weary tenderness. "I am tired," she said.

When she passed between the curtains of the doorway Mr. Pennington was still sitting silent before the hearth. His cigar was almost consumed, and the fire had burned itself down.

"I came back to tell you," said Mrs. Pennington, in a colorless low voice, "that you were right. I have changed my mind." She waited without expectancy.

A great relief swept over the man's strained face. Its lines relaxed visibly into a softened acceptance.

"I was sure you would," he approved gravely. "You were nervous, and not yourself—I understand—"

"I was mistaken," she interrupted quietly and without emotion; "that was all. I thought because I had waited so long I had a right to my freedom. Nobody is free who is responsible for another's existence. The obligation never lets go."

She stood passive and apparently impartial. A numbing reaction held her quiet. Where she had taken up arms against fate, she laid them down, accepting defeat as an old, familiar friend. But Mr. Pennington had no mind for further unsettling psychological argument. The foundations of his satisfied life had been shaken that night to their inmost center, and already he designed repair and prevention of a further catastrophe.

"I was sure you would see it in the right light," he agreed, with magnanimity a little hurried. "We will just forget all that has been said tonight." He patted her shoulder a trifle awkwardly, relieved that she did not, as before, wince under his hand and shake it off. "We will just forget it."

"Thank you. I dare say that would be best," his wife returned quietly.

She scarcely heard him. A stifling sense of futility was adding itself to her defeated hope. She had waited

THE SMART SET

seventeen years to be free, and in the moment of achievement her feet were set again upon the treadmill. When she had left the room and started up the stairs, something caught in her throat and choked her. For one wrung, tortured moment she leaned against the wall, her face hid in her trembling hands, and her lips shaped

the cry of her sick soul, forgetting the tide of years.

"Mother!" she gasped, so low she scarcely knew it. "Oh, mother—mother!"

Then she went on slowly up the stairs. From Dorothy's door the light crept out, a little shining pathway to her feet.



THE ROBIN IN THE SQUARE

By ARTHUR STRINGER

IT whistles and flutes in the twilight,
It calls through the ghostlike trees,
Till I feel the cool of the steadfast north
And the balm of the pineland breeze.

And far from the heart of the city,
From the midst of its tears and aches,
It carries me back to the balsam scent,
To the sweep of the plunging lakes.

It calls me away from the tumult,
It lures me afar from the pain
Of the years that are lost in useless strife,
And leaves me a child again.

*It leaves me a child of wonder,
Facing a pine-fringed west,
Feeling that peace is God's last gift,
And knowing that love is best!*



WAS QUITE STRUCK WITH IT

PERKINS—Did you see Morgan's new machine?
JERKINS—Not in time.

WHAT FAITH IS FED ON

By OLIVIA HOWARD DUNBAR

I must have been fifteen years or so since I had lost sight of them all—Jerry Ogden, of whom my memories nevertheless remained peculiarly distinct, Caroline Starkweather, whom he had married, and Amy Ledyard, his distant cousin. When Jerry's name, now and then, had been mentioned, I admit that I had thought of him a little curiously, but I had never yet been possessed by a motive strong enough to lead me to Caroline Ogden's happily not too accessible doors. Even as a young girl she had been more vapid than her very simple beauty could successfully gloss over, and I had been told that these attributes of hers had since become intensified in the least desirable ratio. As for Amy Ledyard, I had almost dreaded meeting her again after all these years, for I feared that the lovely creature I remembered must be so changed and smitten. She had once been of the type that other young girls stand apart from worshipfully. But while she seemed to us so rare as scarcely to be native to our visible earth, we nevertheless did not hesitate to assign her to a conspicuous place in the world's affairs. Usually, I believe, we foresaw her married to a prince and the object of extravagant homage in some far-off and unnamed country. But life had handled her in no such delicate and reverent fashion, and it was not many months previous to my seeing her that I learned she was in New York—alone, poor and giving music lessons.

I had thought of her, and rather sadly, during a somber afternoon in early December that I spent at a picture exhibition, when Amy Ledyard herself radiantly floated in, offering not the

least excuse in the world for any compassion of mine. Of whatever obvious heritage she had been defrauded, there was, after all, something in the look of her that bore out the innocent predictions of our girlhood. Even though the exquisitely brittle loveliness of her youth was gone, there had been a shifting of her essential qualities to a more enduring and even shapelier mold. She looked tranquil, triumphant, and, as I thought, very beautiful; but hers was always like the beauty of faintly iridescent glass, that delays, until you have closely looked, the fullness of its perfection. At all events, there was not a suggestion of sorrow or sordidness about her, and we met so naturally and with such eager pleasure that it seemed absurd that we should have allowed so many precious years to slip. We left the gallery together and walked slowly down through the violet-shot mist of the Avenue; and one or the other of us mentioned at last the Ogdens.

Amy Ledyard knew, of course, as well as I did that Jerry had married Caroline Starkweather for her money, and I suppose I must have been on the point of discussing them on the basis of that vulgar assumption. However, Amy herself forestalled me by a prompt reference to the money—one always had to mention the money; it stood so obscurely in the way of everything else—but her effort, I felt, was toward extenuation. Jerry and Caroline were making such inspired use of their opportunities, she told me. They had founded and were conducting a wonderful free hospital for children, among other charities; people were beginning

THE SMART SET

to look to them for leadership as well as dollars. I remembered that dear Amy had always been as incapable of penetration as a seraph; it did not once occur to me that any transfiguration of Jerry Ogden could have taken place.

"Caroline must have had an amazing access of energy, to account for all this," I allowed myself to comment. "You remember how she used to loll about with novels."

"Oh, but of course it isn't Caroline, really," their eulogist naïvely explained. "It's Jerry. Philanthropy gets sentimental if it hasn't a strong, clear intelligence behind it, and that's what Jerry supplies. He's so clear-headed. Then, even if dear Caroline were as capable as he, she's never well and strong enough for such undertakings."

I laughed a little. "Amy Ledyard, you know that this sort of thing seems just about as spontaneous, on Jerry Ogden's part, as—well, as his marriage was!"

She looked at me with angelic earnestness. "Oh, my dear, you didn't misunderstand *that*, did you? We all loved him so for it! You know he was only a boy when—when all this came up, and the family was in such a muddle. Now his unfortunate father's affairs are all straightened out, and the whole enormous family is respectably educated, and his mother and the rest of them are so happy and grateful to him. And I wish you could know how divinely good he has always been to poor Caroline! Jerry is wonderful!"

It seemed incredible that even Amy Ledyard should be able to hold to such a transparent fable for fifteen years, or that it could really be Jerry Ogden of whom such a notion had been framed. It was quite easy to imagine Jerry, like some plump, impudent robin, taking his ease in the nest that poor, stupid Caroline had feathered for him. I was even willing to condone his mercenary marriage, for the family circumstances had been as Amy suggested, pretty sternly exigent. But it seemed unnecessary to glorify him for his successful bargain. And the idea came with a peculiar grotesqueness from

Amy's lips, for I half remembered—in fact, as I thought of it, I was really sure—that there had once been an unacknowledged tenderness between the cousins. Scarcely an "attachment;" perhaps, at the least, an ephemeral affection. I remembered now that somebody had once said that Jerry Ogden had jilted his beautiful cousin. That couldn't have been true, at any rate.

A still more perplexing experience befell me a few days later, when, at Amy's urgent request, I climbed her dingy and interminable stairs. It surely wasn't often that lovely, luxurious people, like Amy Ledyard, lived so meagerly, and I wondered how she had the heart to spread a veil of grace over the meagreness, as she had pitifully done. She begged my admiration of an effect of distinction that, even though one saw through it, she had undoubtedly contrived; and after she had given me tea, she insisted on showing me her makeshifts and ingenuities, which I saw she was accustomed to laugh about. And she told me that she got her own breakfasts and made her own shirtwaists, beside the musical drudgery that she was paid for. Why didn't she hate it all, and confess as much? How could she persistently wear that serene and shining look?

It became apparent very soon that one couldn't know Amy without knowing the Ogdens, too. She spoke of them constantly, and seemed to be almost an extra member of their household. They had a way of coöordinating her visits with their own uncomfortable and fairly frequent emergencies, and I found it was she who did most of the supervision of the Children's Hospital. She had not failed to give them her own charming account of her restored friendship with me, and they could scarcely do less than profess a desire to have their share in it. A stiffly affectionate note, therefore, from Caroline Ogden allowed me such latitude in the matter of date that I saw it was as well to make an immediate plunge, and Amy and I were shortly committed to spend a night with our friends. I found that I looked forward

to the occasion with a definite and lively curiosity.

The most annoying feature of that visit, as I remember it, was the indulgence that I was temporarily obliged to feel toward Jerry. He had always had a superficial charm, a light, smooth companionableness, but surely, at our time of life, such empty graces should not distract and mislead. However, I went with the intention of exposing Jerry's iniquities to poor, deluded Amy—and I did nothing of the sort. It may have been that I found it harder to judge his immoral acquirement of the Starkweather millions, when I saw the price he paid.

We did not see Caroline until dinner, for she claimed all an invalid's privileges, and was resting. It was Jerry whom we found in the motor that met us at the station, Jerry who throughout our visit nimbly combined the arts of host and hostess. We were shortly on almost as easy terms as when we had lived on the same street together and played in each other's yards. It occurred to me that a stranger might think him, with his ready, whimsical speech and his air of understanding you before you spoke, the most agreeable fellow in the world. But delightful as he was to me, I fancied there was something special in his manner to Amy—nothing tangible, of course, for Jerry was always prudently indefinite, but a something deferential and solicitous that, at all events, set her to blooming softly in response. But I had known that Jerry would be the kind of man who delights in the rigid safeguards of marriage and makes the most of the chaperonage that the institution affords him.

I believe we had succeeded in feeling really young, Amy and Jerry and I, until Jerry's wife appeared, and then we knew we were as old as she. Various dots and dimples in Caroline Ogden's fat, flabby face were dwindling landmarks of her youthful prettiness; otherwise the girl that I had known seemed in some distressing fashion to have been absorbed within this unfamiliar and unlovely bulk. We passed

ceremoniously out to a dinner from which no conceivable formality was omitted and which, like the preposterous suburban fortress that sheltered us, measured Caroline Ogden's idea of dignity and state. Our hostess had been to town that day, and her recital of the trivial annoyances that had befallen her lasted through perhaps four courses. The other guests showed a wan hardness. They had neither my reasons for interest in the situation nor what I now conjectured to be Amy's. As for Jerry, he exhibited an experienced diplomacy, gently interrupting his wife, paying her innocuous compliments, leaping and cavoring across the persistent path of her reminiscence. Although willing now and then to pause, Caroline did not once swerve, nor did she by a word abridge her story. I had always had a notion that the distribution of money in a family interestingly affects its manners, but this was quite too painful a proof. Naturally masterful, Jerry had become a complete serf. He would have done anything rather than offend Caroline. He was mortally afraid of her. And could dear Amy see no better than to interpret this as Jerry's "kindness" to his wife?

I remember resenting the manner in which, after dinner, as we women withdrew, Caroline turned to Amy Ledyard and remarked that the monthly bills for the hospital had just come in, and that she supposed she had been shockingly overcharged.

"Let me go over them, dear," Amy suggested with incredible enthusiasm. "I can slip away now."

"Very well. You know where to find them," the philanthropist indifferently agreed. And Amy did not return until we were going to bed.

It was, however, no affair of mine how purseproud and lazy Caroline Starkweather had become. Nothing better could have been expected of her. And Jerry Ogden had certainly greedily invited his own destruction. But why should the beautiful fine thread of Amy Ledyard's life become involved in the coarse tangle of the Ogdens'? Caroline

made unscrupulous use of her, as I had promptly seen. And Amy permitted it, partly because of her own angelic unselfishness, but mainly—I began to put the matter quite frankly—to serve Jerry, to make it easier for him.

I insisted that Amy come back to town with me the next morning, and we left by an early train. I said something pleasant of Jerry on the way in—nobody could have helped feeling a passing sympathy for Caroline Ogden's husband. But Amy accepted my careless tribute too gratefully.

"I knew you would see how good he is!"

I said nothing more until we were alone together on the forward deck of the ferryboat, with a harbor fog drifting gently about us, and Twenty-third Street still comfortably distant.

"Amy," I then said deliberately, "why didn't you marry Jerry Ogden?"

She turned her face away, and had no answer ready, not even a rebuke for my presumption. "But we were never engaged to be married," she at last protested feebly. And then she added, with a haggard smile: "Jerry and I should have cut a great dash, shouldn't we, with our united fortunes!"

"But you might have made something of Jerry." My insistence was not kind, but the tormenting unreality of Amy's position was of a sort to upset discretion.

"You belittle him," she said with recovered dignity. "And perhaps you belittle me a little, too. I believe I am of some service to Jerry—as it is."

"But that is just it. Dear Amy, you will waste yourself so! Jerry will take and take—"

"Why shouldn't he?" Amy asked. We had only a moment more together and she might have evaded me, but she chose not to. "He shall take what I mean to give him. I cannot explain to you, but he sacrificed everything once. If I should choose to make any sacrifice now, it would be perfectly fitting for him to accept it. But I am doing nothing of the sort. I am simply consulting my own happiness. And I

am happy. Are you? Is Caroline? Are many people that you know?"

Her lovely, glowing look so perfectly bore out her challenging assertion that I was silenced. And only slowly could I realize the implications of this impetuous confession, which, from a woman of Amy Ledyard's reserve and simplicity, were of course stupendous. She believed, then, that Jerry, loving her, had made a heroic renunciation. And she believed that, in her own exquisite sense, in a sense that would never define itself, that would never demand expression, they therefore belonged to each other. I decided that the thing was too rare and high for my familiar, meddling touch. I would stand aside hereafter. Amy had maintained her airy pinnacle for fifteen years. Perhaps she might maintain it for a lifetime. And at all events, one who looked understandingly into her serene face must almost envy her those severe and barren joys.

After this I saw Amy Ledyard frequently, but I did not go again to the Ogdens', my withdrawal, which I am sure I should have contrived in any case, having been made possible, even imperative, by Caroline Ogden's increased invalidism. One could not know, of course, with a woman of her familiar type, whether she had made a deliberate and luxurious choice of pastimes, or was genuinely ill, but I gathered from Amy's restrained comments that the gynes were cutting pretty deeply into Jerry's long suffering frame. It was plain too, that, as his own bondage tightened, Amy's visits must be proportionately welcome to him. The gentle coming of a sane, charming, sympathetic woman, whose presence was not questioned, was even demanded, by his exigent wife, he must infinitely value. Then, I knew Jerry Ogden well enough to suspect that there was something peculiarly congenial to him in the very vagueness of the relation between Amy and himself. Not only was it a soothing alternative to the excessive definiteness of his acknowledged bond, but I know he enjoyed his delicate manipulation of Amy's sensitive temperament. Jerry had all the ignoble tact-

fulness that such expert balancing demanded, and it was impossible to exhaust that determined and passionate idealism of Amy's. I remember when it first occurred to me that there would be an end some day of all this strain and balancing and pretense if, after all, Caroline Ogden were really ill. And I wondered why this thought had not its prompt corollary of satisfaction, as far as Amy Ledyard was concerned. For naturally, once released from his own imprisonment, Jerry would claim for his own that beautiful and faithful spirit.

My attachment to Amy Ledyard grew so intimate and profound that perhaps the greatest regret occasioned by my leaving New York for an indefinite time was that it separated me from her. On the last day that I saw her she looked younger, happier than ever. I tried to cast out my dim and anxious fears.

It was seven years before I saw her again, for the one summer when I passed through New York she had gone over to some German baths with Jerry and Caroline—I could guess in what exhausting capacity. The hospital had been extended to twice its original size, but Caroline was so ill nowadays, Amy wrote me, that they no longer troubled her with the details of its administration. The poor woman had become rather exacting, but one must forgive much to her severe invalidism. There was not an hour, she told me, when Jerry was not faithfully at hand. And I, reading this from my impartial distance, knew that Caroline Ogden believed her husband to be still her devoted lover, just as Amy Ledyard believed him true to a transcendent loyalty of her own pure imagining. And in neither case did the belief result from definite assurance on Jerry's scrupulous part. The inferences to be drawn from his agreeable silences and omissions were always so eloquent, so flattering, so secret. It was so long now that his subtle talent had served him. It had become his trade; I began to see that he was likely to live by it indefinitely.

The autumn that I returned I took

a house on Long Island and invited Amy Ledyard to stay with me. As it was so early that her winter's work had not yet started in, I persuaded her that she could afford the time. I told her that she needed country air, which was theoretically sound, but the truth was that summer in town, in her narrow quarters, had left her looking neither tired nor ill. Plainly, she was not made of such earthly and perishable stuff as the rest of us, her rather saddened contemporaries. Moreover, she displayed always a kind of blossomy daintiness that connotes usually a maid at one's elbow and that seemed to me inexplicable in a woman who, as she herself confessed, made constant use of the Elevated and the Subway and hadn't afforded a cab in years. Women know that other women do not succeed in this difficult art by chance; that it comes only by *caring*—and how, after all this time, could poor Amy Ledyard care?

Before she came, I determined that we would not talk of the Ogdens. I was tired of them. It was Amy herself on whom I wished to cherish and focus my attention. But after several days of struggle, I saw that such a restriction left me only a fragment of my friend. Amy's hospitality to the Ogdens' interests had left her scant room within even her own invaded personality. She had almost forgotten, as devoted wives forget, that she had ever been a separate individual.

It was scarcely a week after she had got settled with me that the climax came. We were alone that night and had just gone to our rooms, when I heard a telegram brought to Amy's door. Night gives such messages impressiveness, and I felt perhaps a foolish awe. Then, as I delayed going to her, I successively faced the situations of which this might be the unlovely warning. But she did not wait for me to come, and a moment afterwards, flushed and excited, stood at my door. "It is from Jerry," she said, holding the paper toward me, "and you must advise me what to do."

There was nothing that either of us

could say of Caroline Ogden's death, and though at first I faltered in the attempt, I soon saw that this was not what disturbed Amy. "Tell me whether I shall go," she begged me.

"Go—to the Ogdens'?"

"Yes—you see he hasn't said—"

It was so plain to me now that the poor girl yearned to feel herself summoned, that she had sprung past the thought of Caroline to Jerry's possible need.

"But, Amy, you know that you couldn't go tonight. And—I believe that I would telegraph first, if I were you." The barenness of Jerry's announcement had affected me, as I knew it had her also.

"Yes, that is better. Do advise me, won't you. I don't want to seem—I don't want— Dear Jerry!" she broke off. "He has been so good, so patient!"

We did not sleep that night, but while Amy's hours, I knew, were given up to prayers for Caroline Ogden's unfortunate spirit, and to invocations of peace and blessing for Jerry, my own were spent in less pious fashion. I found little reassurance in the thought of Jerry Ogden's freedom.

It was not unnatural, perhaps, that weeks should pass without our seeing Jerry Ogden. He had written only a line to thank Amy for her offers and services. On the day that she had gone out to gather some hospital memoranda from Caroline's desk, Jerry had been called away. After that she did not suggest going again. And she accepted gratefully my invitation to stay with me during the winter, going into town daily for her lessons and other engagements. Once or twice I invited Jerry out for dinner, and nothing could have been more friendly and charming than the manner in which he declined to come. He was, of course, afraid of Amy; and it was her horror, and mine, that she almost knew he was afraid—she never quite knew, and she certainly could never have fully understood. It wasn't a pleasant thing that happened before my anxious eyes that winter. Poor Amy's life had lost its direction, and the energy and love that for years she

had so prodigally spent now withered in her hesitating hands. She looked as if she wondered why she lived, and I am sure that in all her life she never before had asked herself that hopeless question.

No one who knew Amy would have suspected her of an overeagerness to succeed Caroline Ogden—though I believe she must have been human enough to expect that this would ultimately happen. But for the most part I think she forgot whether Caroline were alive or dead. The merest sign of friendliness from Jerry would have sufficed her. For through so many years she had lived, and lived abundantly, on her belief in Jerry as a knight and hero, and even her indulgent vision could not reconcile this unexplained neglect of his with knightliness. And yet—she still looked for him.

By the time that summer came any other woman's faith would have been dead. But there were deep sources of vitality in Amy's spirit. I felt a little sorry, it is true, when she came to me one day and said that it was necessary for her to have a brief talk with Jerry Ogden, and asked me to arrange it. But I promised her that she should see him.

Three days later we arrived at the Ogden house at the very moment that Jerry, most debonair of widowers, was leaving it. For a moment I had a flash of understanding of his significance to Amy—there was something so fresh and live and boyish about him. I looked squarely in his eyes when he said that it was his abominable luck to be obliged to catch a train, and asked him to wait over until the next. We were on the point of going to Europe, I told him, with no thought of an early return. and a half-hour now was the longest that we should detain him from his engagement. There was no escape from this, and fifteen minutes later I contrived to leave the cousins alone.

It shone plainly in Amy's face, as she came back to me and we drove away together, that her magnanimity had suggested a last resource to her, and that she had saved that faith of hers.

And perhaps, after all, it was her faith in herself, or in life, that she so desperately needed to recover, for it seemed incredible that to such a woman Jerry Ogden could have meant so much.

"Would you like to know," she asked me immediately, "what I said to him? I felt that it had to be said. His life must be so odd and lonely, and you know how punctilious he has always been about following Caroline's slightest wish. So I told him that I feared he might not know how Caroline really felt about his—marrying again. You see, that would have been difficult to write. I had to say it, and say it quickly—"

"Amy! Then it is all arranged, at last, between you?"

"What I had to tell him was that I knew Caroline didn't mind—that indeed

she expressly wished it. And Jerry and I have always been such close friends, I thought I might even go a little further. So I talked to him about Christina Blount. Caroline liked her so much, and she is such a splendid young creature and so beautiful. And I know that Jerry admires her, too. But sometimes men are dull about such things until they are told. At all events, my conscience is freer—and he understood me so beautifully. Jerry always did have the gift of understanding."

She had recovered the panegyric note, but she was satisfied with no other. And she had securely placed herself where Jerry could no longer disappoint her. He has paid us frequent agreeable visits since our descent upon him, and he has told us that he is to marry Christina Blount in the spring.



A SONG OF SPRING

By FRANCIS LIVINGSTON MONTGOMERY

THE daffodils peep shyly through the mold,
Beryl their eyes and polished chrysoprase;
Wantoning winds, playing upon the wold,
Kiss their lids open to the vernal days.
O Breath of Spring, that starts the pulses beating!
O Heart's Desire, to thee I sing, entreating!

Lifting his voice, the golden-throated lark
Flutes to the sky his song impassionate;
Down from the blue, light as an echo, hark!
Answers the love note of his nesting mate.
O Song So Old, still sweet with each repeating!
O Heart's Desire, to thee I sing, entreating!

The soft air subtle fragrances distils
From swelling buds, fresh blown to leaf and flower,
Whose tender green and purple clothe the hills—
Resurgent Life wields now her quick'ning power.
O Ways of Life and Death, so strangely meeting!
O Heart's Desire, to thee I sing, entreating!

THE ANNUAL GARDEN STATEMENT

By D. C. SHAFER

\$ 10.00 worth of garden seeds,
10 days of good hard toil,
1 mammoth pile of noxious weeds,
1 sq. rod of good soil,
1 hoe,
1 spade,
1 rake,
best grade;
1 baby harrow,
2 days of hire,
7 yds. chick wire,
1 large wheelbarrow.

Subtract what you would have to pay
For vegetables you raised
From the total of the cost
And you will be amazed.
Not counting all the work you've done,
The aches and pains you caught,
Like every other year before,
The saving will be o.



IDLE OBSERVATIONS

By AMY WETMORE

THE invitation we always remember is the one that was never received.

THE passion that outliveth all others is jealousy. When that vanishes, be assured that old age draweth nigh.

A MUTUAL enemy is sure to cement friendship, whereas a mutual friend creates enmity.

THOSE who invite you "sociably" to luncheon invariably leave you out "socially" at dinner.

THOSE who talk much of themselves should be encouraged, for they are sure to say no evil.

THE TOUCHSTONE

By EDWARD BOLTWOOD

WHENEVER people spoke to him of matters of importance, Norman Uxbridge had a disconcerting habit of fixing upon them his frank, gray eyes impersonally, almost as if he were studying himself in a mirror. But when Miss Thornaday began to speak that afternoon, although her answer to his question was very important indeed, Uxbridge looked down at her hands, tightly clasped in the lap of her blue gown, and not until she paused did he glance up, with his quiet and resolute smile.

"But I do not mean to argue, Margaret," he said gently. "I do not ask you to explain. Whatever you decide, that is my law everlasting."

Miss Thornaday moved her well poised head insistently.

"You must let me insist that there are many better women for you, Norman," she contended. Her eyelashes were wet, and she turned away.

"Well, where?" parried Uxbridge, trying to slip into a lighter mood. "Among our mines in South Africa? Or here on your East Side in New York?"

"You talk as if South Africa and the East Side made up the whole world."

"On the contrary," said Norman, "I don't think highly of either just at present."

They were sitting in front of the wood fire in Miss Thornaday's cozy parlor at the Working Girls' Home, which she had endowed out of the Thornaday millions, and where she had lived a good deal for the past five or six years. She had been living there when Uxbridge left New York to win fame as a mining engineer. The room made no attempt at luxury, and yet it plainly

belonged to a rich woman who knew what a sitting room should be.

Margaret leaned forward, so that the glow of the lamp softened the severe beauty of her face.

"I think, Norman, you are the most manly person alive in the way you take things."

"The effect of practice," he explained airily. "You see, this is the third 'No' you have given me. One at Southampton, one in front of this very fire, five years ago—"

But she waved aside the light mood which he had assumed.

"No other man could be so unselfish and so careful not to make it hard for a girl, who must say what I have had to say to you."

"The credit, if there is any, is nature's, and not mine," he disclaimed.

Her tender eyes were brimming again, as she gazed at Uxbridge proudly. Margaret could not remember a time when she did not know Uxbridge, nor a time when she was not proud of him. It always rested her, somehow, merely to look at his sweep of arm and his decisive, reasonable mouth and the strong lines of his shoulders.

"But why talk about me?" he demanded brightly. "I want to talk about you. First, to thank you. You've been very kind to me since I landed last month. You've walked and ridden with me, and we've had a glorious pair of days, like the days of old, at your place on Long Island, and you have entertained me at tea often in this asylum, where you are the Lady of Mercy." Suddenly he stood up and leaned against the heavy mantel, facing her. "Listen!" said he.

THE SMART SET

The windows were assaulted constantly by the clamor of the tenements, by screeching women and children, by the metallic din of wheels, by hoarsely shouting men; and, over all, by the rumbling and whining trains on the Elevated. The sound was the tireless voice of the slum—raucous, grim and terrible.

"Listen!" pursued Uxbridge. "That sound brings me to the second thing I want to say. I love you more and more for your loyalty to this place. I used to make cheap fun of you for it. Well, I don't now. I love you for it, for your fight here against greed and misery and vice. It is noble for a girl like you to give herself to this and to nothing else, as you are doing. Whatever becomes of me, I shall remember always this single-hearted devotion of yours, Margaret, and I shall thank God that I know of it and love you for it." He had turned from her slightly, staring down at the embers. "The finest thing I ever knew," he said, "this single-hearted sacrifice of what most women hold dear, for the sake of the wretched, the—"

"You must not say that!" broke in Margaret passionately.

"Must not?"

"No," she reiterated, steadyng herself. "I cannot endure to have you say that, or think it. Sit down, Norman. You shall not put me on a false pedestal. You are entitled to the truth. My devotion to the work here is not single-hearted. It is interwoven with another's love for me, and with mine for him."

She seemed at once to have been relieved of a burden. Her voice lost its note of strain, and her shoulders squared themselves gracefully. Uxbridge, looking forward into the fire, did not stir.

"He was a doctor at the college settlement where I began," resumed Miss Thornaday. "He was poor, because he was giving his skill to the poor. He typified to me the perfect spirit of help to the helpless. Do you understand, Norman? It was inevitable. Everything led us into love—

our work, our ambitions, our companionship. But there never has been a promise between us. A year ago he went to establish himself in a Western city. I know the reason. He would not marry a rich woman unless he was earning more than a livelihood."

"The right thing, of course," said Uxbridge, with a nod of approval. She glanced at him fondly, prouder than ever of his unflinching strength.

"Margaret, I am absolutely certain that you have won the greatest happiness, and that you will hold it. I can imagine nothing else; my mind won't work any other way. Force of habit, I suppose. You see, I have been wishing happiness for you ever since I can remember, and I'll do it until the last minute I live." Uxbridge hesitated briefly. "What did you mean about a false pedestal?" he added.

"Why, you were praising me," she murmured, "for single-hearted devotion to a duty, and now—"

"The pedestal is there, just the same," said Uxbridge. "You haven't made the slightest change in my opinion of it."

"But you praise me, Norman, for something that—that raises a barrier between us. For if I had not come to this place, this work—"

"You might still be heart free," he finished for her. "Yes, but you would not have fulfilled a very noble life. That's the important thing. Good night."

Margaret gave him a hand which trembled a little. He clasped it firmly, and the door closed behind him.

Uxbridge had quarters at his club. After leaving Margaret that evening, his impressions of time and distance were curiously confused. His cab, for example, seemed to be covering as many miles as a Cunarder, and yet, even after he had changed for dinner, he would have sworn that he had parted from Miss Thornaday only a few seconds before, so vivid in his eyes was her grave face.

The dinner was a small one, given in Norman's honor by Johnnie Laudian,

whose invitation for a fortnight's yachting cruise Uxbridge had recently declined. The other guests at the table were all of Johnnie's yachting party, and among them was McCord, a young lawyer, who sat next to Uxbridge.

"You'd better come and be a sailor boy, too, Norman," said McCord.

"That's exactly what I'm telling him," vociferated Laudian indignantly. "He looks peaked, doesn't he? New York isn't doing you any good, Norm, old scout. Where did you pick up those devilish wrinkles between your eyebrows? Come out on the bounding sea and watch the steward work!"

"I'll get enough of the bounding sea from here to Cape Town next month, Johnnie," rejoined Uxbridge pleasantly.

"Not so soon as that?" protested his host.

"Oh, yes," said Norman.

"By George, I nearly forgot!" exclaimed Johnnie abruptly, raising his glass. "Congratulations, Mac! Congratulate McCord, you fellows! It's in all the papers."

"Engaged?" laughed one.

"No, no, no!" grunted Laudian in disgust, being himself married. "Congratulate him about that big will case. The rascal's clients have just won out."

"With the help of half a dozen other lawyers, they certainly have," said McCord. "Thank you, Johnnie."

"Tell us," suggested Norman.

"Why, he means that Rudnick litigation," explained McCord. "It's been pending for years, and our firm has just broken the will. It will make some poor people rich—second cousins and things."

"Here's hoping they'll know how to spend the money," put in Laudian.

"Quite a share of the money is likely to be spent in the East Side slums," remarked McCord idly. "One of the heirs—Dr. Rudnick—used to be a great mission worker there. He used to run Margaret Thornaday's mission for her. He's been living in St. Paul, but he came in on the same train with me this morning."

"Well," said Johnnie Laudian, rat-

tling the silver chafing-dish, "who'll have terrapin?"

Uxbridge occupied himself with drawing lines on the cloth with his fish knife, until the conversation around the table was loud and general.

"Look here, Johnnie," he said, "if you'll give me as good dinners as this on the *Naga*, I'm open to argument. When is it you sail—tomorrow?"

Laudian's yacht, with Uxbridge aboard, cruised for three weeks, instead of the appointed two. When he saw Miss Thornaday again he had himself well in hand; his wholesome face, browned by wind and weather, gave no token of the desolation of his hopes. Margaret watched it by the light of her sitting room fire. They had been speaking about many things, but not a word about that which was uppermost in their minds, until Norman picked up from the table an African photograph which he had given her.

"I'm going to start back there on Saturday," he said.

Margaret arched her eyebrows inscrutably.

"I suppose you couldn't put it off, Norman?"

"Come, that's rather a feminine question," he replied, smiling. "If I put it off at all, I might as well put it off forever." Uxbridge laid down the photograph, squaring it mathematically with the edge of the table. "When may I congratulate you?" he queried.

"I don't know," said Miss Thornaday hurriedly. "I—I have seen him. He has had great good fortune, an unexpected inheritance. He came to see me the night you were here last. I presume he is still in New York."

"Presume!" echoed Uxbridge with polite amazement.

"There is a story about our interview," said she. "Do you care to hear it?"

"If you care to have me hear it, my dear girl."

"It won't be the first time I have wanted to confide in you, Norman." She leaned back, out of the light. "He had not written me that he was com-

THE SMART SET

ing, had not written, either, that he was rich. He burst into this room that night, like a tropical storm, and, as if in one short breath, he told me everything, and asked me to marry him.

"It was a moment I had prayed for, but I had a helpless, painful feeling of being swept adrift. I never had that feeling before. I felt a desperate need of a mooring, of something to tie to. Woman-like, you will think, I temporized weakly. Perhaps I was afraid of him. His very appearance, somehow, was changed. While he is not a small man, he is slender and stooping, and his face seems the thinner for his conventional doctor's beard. But that night he looked almost as big as you are.

"'I will not allow you to make me wait,' he said. 'You know that you love me, and I know it. It was meant from the beginning. You know,' he said, 'that in dedicating yourself to this mission work you dedicated yourself to me.'

"He went on, with but little less fervor, to explain his plans. He would spend his money on a series of such homes as this, a hospital, and what not.

"'Why do you try to evade it?' he said. 'This is our life, and it is for this we met and loved.'

"Again I played for time. But I don't know now why I put him the question I did. All I remember is that it came to my tongue as thoughtlessly as a child's 'Let's pretend.'

"'Suppose,' I said, 'that this life work can bring me no happiness? What then?'

"He looked at me queerly, and attempted to take my hand, but I drew it away.

"'Suppose,' I said, 'that lately I have become sure that I can never be happy here?'

"'But I need you,' he answered. 'Love has taught me to need you here.'

"I pressed him. However it had begun, it was no child's play now. Was my happiness nothing to him? Would he sacrifice it to his need of me? Was that his affection? He argued that our love would prove itself, that I was only

dodging an issue, that we were intended for each other and for this work. He had only his own standpoint. My heart shuddered and turned sick and cold. He was all for argument, argument, argument."

Miss Thornaday paused and surveyed the fire with weary, half-closed eyes. Norman frowned reflectively.

"Why did you permit him to argue on your false supposition?" said Uxbridge. "It was not just to him to trick him by a false hypothesis. It was not fair. It was like a trap."

"Well, whatever it was, I did it," she deliberately retorted. "I had chanced on a touchstone, and I used it."

"And what did you expect," demanded Uxbridge, "to torture his mind into believing? Oh, Lord, these women!"

"Norman!" she breathed.

He stood on the hearth rug, gripping the mantel behind him.

"Don't you see?" he continued impetuously. "You goaded the man with a cruel untruth, until— What in Heaven's name, did you wish him to say?"

"One generous word about my happiness, Norman."

"But he was betrayed into apparent selfishness by—let's not mince matters, Margaret—by your own trickery. He was betrayed into believing that you had ceased to love him."

"He left me, believing that," said Miss Thornaday.

Uxbridge planted his fist on the stone shelf.

"I would have fought a man for saying you were capable of such deceit," he declared. "Your happiness? You have tried to spoil it by the silly whim of a coquette. But your happiness is far more important than that, Margaret. It is not too late. You will send a word to him, and—"

"It is too late, Norman. I do not think he loves me. I know that I do not love him. I have learned to tell the true from the false. I am learning now."

Uxbridge, in his indignation, did not heed her final adverb.

"By what test?" said Norman scornfully. "By the test of a made-up lie! By supposing this, and allowing him to leave you, supposing that! A fine touchstone for the testing of a man! I had better say good night, Margaret."

Margaret confronted him. Her face was pale, but mysteriously radiant, like ivory lighted by a hidden lamp; when she spoke, she held the back of

her hand timidly against her chin.

"I told you once, Norman, that you were careful not to make it hard—for a girl—to say things. But you make it very difficult. My touchstone was not made up from a lie. I do not want to live here any more. He went away believing—the truth."

Slowly Norman's eyes began to gleam like stars. He raised his arms pleadingly. She bowed her head.



THE DEEPER SENSE

By ALMON HENSLEY

THE sweet May madness of the daffodils,
The tremulous music of the brooklets, burst
Fresh from their icy bondage. Hark! The first
Sharp tapping of the golden wing! The hills
All suddenly alive! Young Spring, her hand
Fragrant with arbutus, looks o'er the land.

The stir is in our blood; the sap flows swift.
A pause—and then the autumn whir of wings,
Youth flying south. See! Where the sharp frost stings
The trails blaze crimson! In the valleys lift
Mysterious purple mists! Through the wind's moans
The wonder song of life's great overtones.



LIFE—ONE MISTAKE AFTER ANOTHER

MRS. SCRAPPINGTON (musingly)—I presume if one had his life to live over again he would avoid his old mistakes but make others just as painful.

MR. SCRAPPINGTON—Yes. While I shouldn't marry you, I'd probably marry.

GIVE LOVE TODAY

By ETHEL TALBOT

WHEN the lean, gray grasses
Cover me, bury me deep,
No sea wind that passes
Shall break my sleep.

When you come, my lover,
Sorrowful-eyed to me,
Earth mine eyes will cover;
I shall not see.

Though with sad words splendid,
Praising, you call me dear,
It will be all ended;
I shall not hear.

You may live love's riot
Laughingly over my head,
But I shall lie quiet
With the gray dead.

Love, you will not wake me
With all your singing carouse,
Nor your dancing shake me
In my dark house.

Though you should go weeping,
Sorrowful for my sake,
Fain to break my sleeping,
I could not wake.

Now, ere time destroy us—
Shadows beneath and above;
Death has no song joyous,
Nor dead men love—

Now, while deep-eyed, golden,
Love on the mountain sings,
Let him be close holden;
Fetter his wings.

Love, nor joy nor sorrow
Troubles the end of day.
Leave the Fates tomorrow;
Give Love today.

A LAWYER'S MISTAKE

By JAMES BURGHIE

CHARACTERS

LOUIS DE PERIGORD (*Captain in the 117th Hussars, age thirty-three*)

COLONEL ERCOLE (*of the same regiment, age fifty-five*)

CHARLES MERCIER (*a lawyer, age forty*)

CONSTANCE (*De Perigord's wife, age twenty-five*)

PLACE: *Maisons Lafitte, near Paris.*

TIME: *An afternoon in early spring.*

SCENE—A large sitting room, well and comfortably furnished. A woman's hand is apparent in details and general arrangement. A piece of embroidery is thrown over the back of a chair. Fresh flowers are in the vases on the tables. There is a fireplace at the right with a gas log burning in the grate. A door at the right leads to the hall. There is a window at the center and a door at the left leading to bedrooms. A desk stands to the right of the window, a cabinet to the left. A large table in the center of the stage holds a lamp, books, etc. A Morris chair stands by the fireplace. Small tables, chairs, etc., are about the room.

The curtain rises on DE PERIGORD and MERCIER, the former sitting to the right of the table in an armchair. He is in a dressing gown, with a rug thrown over his knees, and looks weak and ill, as if just risen from a sick bed. MERCIER sits in front of the table, facing DE PERIGORD. He is brisk and businesslike.

DE PERIGORD

Then, there is no doubt about this thing?

MERCIER

None whatever. Your late uncle had kept his papers very carefully, and at his death his lawyers found the name of our firm mentioned as being your family representatives, and immediately wrote us. We were anxious not to arouse unfounded hopes, beside which, you were not in a state to give us any information, even if you had any which was not known to us. So we wrote to

them, and have been in correspondence with them for the last six months.

DE PERIGORD
And the result is—

MERCIER
That you are recognized as the sole heir.

DE PERIGORD
What is the amount?

MERCIER
We can't exactly say as yet, but it is large—somewhere about a million.

THE SMART SET

DE PERIGORD

Francs?

MERCIER

Dollars.

DE PERIGORD

A great deal less than that would have been welcome a year ago—even eight months ago. Had I had it then, I should have been able to clear up all my debts; I should not have got into the hands of Mayer; I should not have tried to recoup myself by riding that crazy brute in the Military Steeplechase—and I should have been a man instead of a mere bunch of useless bones. And best of all, my wife would have been spared the anxiety and worry and poverty of the last six months. I tell you, neither you nor I can ever know, ever even imagine, what that girl must have gone through to keep me alive. And I don't know how I can ever repay her. (*He leans back in his chair, putting his hands over his eyes.*)

MERCIER (*after a pause*)

Is there anything I can do for you now, Captain de Perigord?

DE PERIGORD (*sitting up again*)

How soon can the matter be settled?

MERCIER

That is impossible to say. You see, it will be best to realize everything—you can afford to make some slight sacrifice—and invest the proceeds over here, where you will have direct control. Everything should be finished in about six months.

DE PERIGORD

And meanwhile—

MERCIER

In the meantime we shall be happy to advance you whatever you may need.

DE PERIGORD

Be careful! You don't know what my needs may be.

MERCIER (*smiling*)

You forget that we have known you for a long time, and that we have managed most of your affairs. Besides, your expenses just now are not likely

to be much above the ordinary daily ones.

DE PERIGORD

You needn't remind me of that, confound you!

MERCIER (*holding out his hand*)

Pardon! I didn't mean to hurt. Tell me, what do the doctors say?

DE PERIGORD

Oh, they say that as soon as I am able to travel I am to go South for a little while, and then up into the mountains for the summer. But they don't say whether all this is likely to put me on my feet again—and, of course, what they don't say is the one thing of real importance. But, to get back to the point, how far are you really willing to go?

MERCIER

As far as may be necessary.

DE PERIGORD

That's too vague. A hundred thousand francs?

MERCIER

More than that.

DE PERIGORD (*with a sigh of relief*)

That's all right, then. Can you let me have anything now? Or—wait; how much have you with you?

MERCIER

Two thousand francs—and my chequebook.

DE PERIGORD

Well, you might leave me a thousand francs—in small bills; but it's the chequebook I should like to make use of? Are you in a hurry?

MERCIER

I am entirely at your disposal.

DE PERIGORD

I'll take you at your word. I should like to give Constance a surprise when she gets back from Paris.

MERCIER

From Paris?

DE PERIGORD

Yes, she goes there every Friday—to confession.

MERCIER

Ah, yes—to confession.

DE PERIGORD

I should like to show her a lot of bills—receipted. It is some time since she has seen any of that kind. So if you don't mind going round the stores here—there are not too many, and I think she has been dealing entirely with the local people—and paying the various accounts—they will take your cheques—there would be something very pretty to show her. What do you think?

MERCIER (*rising*)

That's a good idea, Captain. I'll go at once.

DE PERIGORD

And when you come back you might get a pound of chocolate—chocolate almonds; they were always her favorite. (*There is a knock at the door.*) Do you mind seeing who that is?

(MERCIER goes to the door at the right and opens it. COLONEL ERCOLE enters. He is a tall, well built man, beginning to grow heavy, with white hair and mustache and in undress uniform.)

ERCOLE

Well, my boy! Your orderly told me you were down today, so I came round at once to see you. How are you? Soon be out and about again, eh?

DE PERIGORD

This is very kind of you, Colonel. Let me introduce M. Charles Mercier, my lawyer.

ERCOLE

M. Mercier. Lawyer?

DE PERIGORD (*laughing*)

It's all right, Colonel. M. Mercier has brought me good news.

ERCOLE

I'm delighted to hear it! And delighted to meet you, M. Mercier (*Holding out his hand*) under the circumstances. Otherwise, you know—

MERCIER

Otherwise—a little anxious—eh, Colonel? I am not surprised. But I am very glad to make your acquaint-

ance. (*They shake hands.*) Well, I must go and see about those commissions, Captain. I'll be back as soon as I can.

DE PERIGORD

Thank you, Mercier.

(MERCIER goes toward the door at the right, picking up his hat and coat from a chair as he passes.)

Oh, by the way, will you try and get a nice bunch of white violets? There ought to be some to be had, and she used to love them.

MERCIER

I'll remember. I think I saw some as I came along. *Au revoir*, Colonel, Captain. (*He bows and goes out.*)

DE PERIGORD

Won't you sit down, Colonel, and tell me the news? You must stay and see Madame de Perigord. She will be here soon.

ERCOLE

Where is madame?

DE PERIGORD

Gone to Paris. She goes every Friday—to confession.

ERCOLE

To Paris? To confession?

DE PERIGORD

Yes; she always had a fancy for her own old church—St. Etienne.

ERCOLE

Ah—yes. Quite so, quite so!

DE PERIGORD

No accounting for woman's fancies, is there, Colonel? But now I want to hear all about the squadron. What has happened since I have been—away?

ERCOLE

Nothing much. Durand and Debussy have got their steps. Champigny has married and resigned—

DE PERIGORD

Champigny married! Who's the girl?

ERCOLE

A Lecomte, of Arles. Nice girl, but no money. But Champigny has

enough for both. Got a fine new lot of horses—wish you were able to help get them into shape. Too bad that beast came down with you! You know the regiment lost a pot of money over it.

DE PERIGORD (*quickly*)
Don't talk of it, Colonel.

ERCOLE

All right, my boy. But tell me, how do you feel now?

DE PERIGORD
To tell you the truth, Colonel, I don't know. My head is clear enough, though I don't think it would stand any strain, but my legs absolutely refuse to do any work at all.

ERCOLE
Any pain?

DE PERIGORD
At times. They've given me some stuff for that—take it with a syringe, you know—stick it in your arm or somewhere.

ERCOLE
And the doctors, what do they think?

DE PERIGORD
Lord knows what they think! I suppose they *do* think—but they say nothing, except that I am to go South as soon as I can, and then to the Alps for the summer.

ERCOLE
Can you manage it?

DE PERIGORD
This morning I should have had to say no, but since Mercier has been here the situation has changed.

ERCOLE
Mercier? Of course—the lawyer with the good news. What is it—a legacy?

DE PERIGORD
Yes, and a big one. A million—dollars!

ERCOLE
Do you mean it?

DE PERIGORD
Yes. It sounds funny, doesn't it? But it seems to be true. The only

proof I have is that Mercier and his firm are willing to advance me as much as I need.

ERCOLE

Proof enough! Glad to hear it, my boy, very glad! That ought to make things easier for you and help you to get well quickly. Now—there's something I want to talk to you about.

(During the foregoing ERCOLE has been walking about the room, picking up a book here and a vase there, and generally fidgeting like a man with something on his mind. He now crosses to the fireplace and stands with his back to it, his feet wide apart.)

You know, as Colonel, I'm responsible for the honor of the regiment, and anything that affects the honor of any one of the officers affects the regiment—and me. Do you understand that?

DE PERIGORD
Of course, Colonel. But—

ERCOLE
In fact, I'm a sort of father to you. Well—er—where's your wife?

DE PERIGORD
My wife? Constance? Why—I told you—in Paris. She goes every Friday—to confession.

ERCOLE
Ah—yes. Do you know anyone, or does she, in the Avenue de Friedland?

DE PERIGORD
The Avenue de Friedland?

ERCOLE
Yes—Number 27.

DE PERIGORD
27 Avenue de Friedland! Why—why, that's Mayer's place! What are you talking about, Colonel? (He leans forward, gripping the arms of his chair.) How dare you—how do you come to speak of 27 Avenue de Friedland—of Mayer—and Constance, my wife—in the same breath?

ERCOLE (crossing from the fireplace to the table and sitting in front of it, facing DE PERIGORD. He has lost his

nervousness and speaks quietly and seriously.)
What do you know about Mayer?

DE PERIGORD

Nothing much—except that he is a Jew financier—moneylender—whatever you like to call it. But—

ERCOLE

And a man about town—with an eye for a pretty woman. Have you ever had any dealings with him?

DE PERIGORD

Yes; I borrowed thirty thousand francs of him.

ERCOLE

When?

DE PERIGORD

Last August.

ERCOLE

When did you pay it back?

DE PERIGORD

I didn't—I don't remember—Good God! It was due in November, and—

ERCOLE

A month after your accident. There! We have it! The man has simply made use of that to—

DE PERIGORD

To do what, Colonel? For Heaven's sake, speak out! What are you driving at? Where does Constance come in in all this?

ERCOLE

Your wife has been going to Paris every week?

DE PERIGORD

Yes—I have told you so several times. She goes every Friday to St. Etienne to confession. (ERCOLE rises from his chair and goes up to the window at the center, where he stands looking out.) Colonel—Colonel—come here and tell me what you mean! Can't you see you're driving me mad? What is all this about? You came here to tell me something; stop playing round with it, and tell me what it is.

ERCOLE (coming back and standing behind his chair, gripping the back with both hands)

Your wife has for several weeks been

spending her Friday afternoons at 27 Avenue de Friedland—in Mayer's rooms.

DE PERIGORD (*lying back in his chair and laughing*)

Ha, ha! Ha, ha! Colonel, you shouldn't try those things on a man in my state! Ha, ha! Constance and Mayer! Mayer and Constance! Ha, ha! Ha, ha!

ERCOLE (*quietly*)

There is nothing to laugh at, I assure you. Do you think I am likely to make a joke of that sort of thing—of a woman's name—to her husband? It is as I have said.

DE PERIGORD (*sitting up, looking keenly at the Colonel*)

It's a lie, a damnable lie! Why—it's ridiculous—impossible! (He lies back again, closing his eyes. There is a pause. Suddenly he raises his head, and speaks slowly and deliberately.) Colonel, you have—been—after—her—yourself—(Quickly and fiercely) and this is your revenge! Why—you—you—(He grips the arms of his chair and tries to lift himself up, but sinks back.)

ERCOLE (*sharply*)

Captain de Perigord, you forget yourself!

DE PERIGORD

Forgive me, Colonel! I don't know what I am saying. Constance and Mayer! Why—why have you told me this? Have you any proof of what you say? Is a woman's honor nothing, that you should take it away like this?

ERCOLE (*coming from behind his chair and sitting down*)

My boy, a woman's honor is a very precious thing, and may not be attacked lightly nor without proof. But when a woman loses her honor, throws it away, she ceases to be worthy of consideration in a question of honor, and the thing to be thought of is the honor of her husband—which, in this case, is your honor and that of the regiment—of the army. I have not come here without being quite sure of what I had to tell you.

DE PERIGORD

What proof have you?

THE SMART SET

ERCOLE

Three of your comrades have seen her going in on different dates. I myself have seen her twice, and once I saw Mayer—

DE PERIGORD (*under his breath*)
Constance and Mayer! Mayer and Constance!

ERCOLE

I saw Mayer bring her out and put her into a cab. I can give you names and dates if you wish.

DE PERIGORD

But it is so impossible, Colonel. There can be no—no motive.

ERCOLE

Who knows? I am twenty years older than you, and I have never yet been able to discover a woman's motive. All kinds of motives are possible, but one can't even guess at what the real one may be.

DE PERIGORD (*who has been muttering to himself without paying attention to ERCOLE*)

It's quite impossible—utterly ridiculous. (*A loud.*) Colonel—

ERCOLE

Yes, my boy?

DE PERIGORD

I wish— (*Listening*) There she is! Now we shall know!

ERCOLE (*rising*)

I think I will—

DE PERIGORD

You will stay! You may as well see it through now. Sit down!

(CONSTANCE enters at the right. *She is well but plainly dressed in black, and wears a heavy veil, which she puts back as she enters. She is pale and rather worn-looking, and her manner and voice make her appear somewhat older than her age. She carries a prayer book.*)

CONSTANCE

Well, Louis, how have you— Ah, Colonel Ercole, this is very kind of you. (*She bows to ERCOLE, who is still standing, and passes behind DE PERIGORD,*

placing a hand on his shoulder. He sits quite still, without appearing to notice her hand.)

ERCOLE (*bowing*)

Madame, your husband's orderly told me that he was out of his room today, so I—

CONSTANCE

Came to see him and bring him the news of the regiment? He has been longing for that for some time past. Won't you sit down, Colonel? You mustn't run away just because I have come home.

(ERCOLE sits; CONSTANCE leans over DE PERIGORD to see his face)

I hope you haven't been talking too much, Louis. You are not tired, are you?

DE PERIGORD

No, I'm not tired.

CONSTANCE

Sure?

DE PERIGORD

Yes.

CONSTANCE

That's good! (*She goes up, taking off her hat and gloves, which she places on a chair in the center. DE PERIGORD relaxes and sighs, as if with relief, as she removes her hand from his shoulder.*) It is not pleasant traveling today—too warm all at once. (*She comes down again, but still remains behind the table.*) You'll take a cup of tea, won't you, Colonel?

ERCOLE

Madame, I—

DE PERIGORD

Constance!

CONSTANCE

Yes, dear?

DE PERIGORD

Come round here, please.

CONSTANCE (*picking up the prayer book which she had laid on the table, and coming round*)
What is it, Louis?

DE PERIGORD (*looking at her for a moment as if trying to recognize her*)
Where have you been this afternoon?

CONSTANCE (*surprised*)
Why—in Paris, of course.

DE PERIGORD
Where?

CONSTANCE
At—at St. Étienne. Don't you remember—

DE PERIGORD
At—St. Étienne? Not—in the Avenue de Friedland?

CONSTANCE (*mechanically*)
Avenue de Friedland?

DE PERIGORD
Avenue de Friedland—Number 27.

CONSTANCE
Louis!

(She steps back, dropping the prayer book. ERCOLE picks it up and hands it to her, not observing that a folded piece of paper has fallen out of it. DE PERIGORD sees the paper and holds out his hand.)

DE PERIGORD
Will you give me that paper, please, Colonel?

(ERCOLE stoops again and picks up the paper, which he gives to DE PERIGORD. He takes it without looking at it, keeping his eyes on CONSTANCE.)

CONSTANCE (*starting forward*)
Give me that paper, Louis!

DE PERIGORD
Were you not with—Mayer?

CONSTANCE (*pleadingly*)
Louis, please give me that paper!

DE PERIGORD
Were you with Mayer?

CONSTANCE (*closing her eyes and swaying slightly, then straightening up and answering in a low but clear voice*)
Yes.

DE PERIGORD
Ah! And—last week?

CONSTANCE
Yes.

DE PERIGORD
And—before that?

CONSTANCE
Yes.

DE PERIGORD (*still keeping his eyes on her, without looking at the paper in his hand*)
Do you—do you love him?

CONSTANCE (*in the same low tone, but very bitterly*)
Love him!

DE PERIGORD
Then, why—

CONSTANCE
Please give me that paper, Louis!

DE PERIGORD (*looking at the folded paper in his hand as if just becoming aware of it. He unfolds it, his eyes dilating as he sees what it is. CONSTANCE stands perfectly still, watching him with eyes full of pity.*)

A thousand francs! A thousand francs! Is that your price?

CONSTANCE
Louis!

DE PERIGORD
What does it mean? There must be some explanation! (He looks again at the banknote and holds it out to her. As she makes no move to take it, does not even look at it, he crushes it in his hand and throws it from him.) Have you nothing to tell me?

CONSTANCE
What can I tell you?

DE PERIGORD
Anything—anything that will give me back—that will let me keep my faith in you. Tell me—tell me—the truth!

CONSTANCE
Can you bear it, Louis?

DE PERIGORD
I must! I must know!
(There is a pause. CONSTANCE looks over DE PERIGORD's head as if trying to make up her mind. ERCOLE rises from his chair, but DE PERIGORD looks round at him, and he sits down again in silence. During the foregoing he has been looking from CONSTANCE to PERIGORD and back; from now on he looks steadily at CONSTANCE, sitting with his elbow on the table and his chin in his hand. Neither of the others

THE SMART SET

takes any notice of him. After a moment CONSTANCE appears to have come to a decision. She speaks quietly but clearly, without a trace of embarrassment or passion. She looks throughout at DE PERIGORD with an expression of mingled love and pity.)

CONSTANCE

Do you remember how much money there was in the house on the day of the Steeplechase?

DE PERIGORD

A few hundred francs. (*He is lying back in his chair as if exhausted, only his eyes fixed on CONSTANCE showing that he is alive.*)

CONSTANCE

Think again.

DE PERIGORD

Surely—

CONSTANCE

Don't you remember taking all we had to wager on Don César? Don't you remember saying that it might as well be "make or break"?

DE PERIGORD

Yes—I remember.

CONSTANCE

Do you remember what our debts were?

DE PERIGORD

We owed most of the tradesmen, I think.

CONSTANCE

All the tradesmen. Anything else?

DE PERIGORD

No. Yes—there was Mayer—thirty thousand francs.

CONSTANCE

Anything else?

DE PERIGORD

No.

CONSTANCE

Think again.

DE PERIGORD

There was nothing else. Wait a moment! No—there was nothing else.

CONSTANCE

Were there no—liabilities that you—shared with anyone else?

DE PERIGORD

Yes. I had backed De Lussand's note for twenty-five thousand. But—

CONSTANCE

From whom had Captain de Lussand borrowed the money?

DE PERIGORD

From Mayer. But—surely, De Lussand—

CONSTANCE

Captain de Lussand shot himself two days after the race.

DE PERIGORD

Good God! (*He looks at ERCOLE, who nods silently.*)

CONSTANCE

When—when you were picked up at the wall after—after your fall, they wanted to take you to the hospital. The doctors told me that you were dying—that you were practically already dead—that there was no possible chance of your recovery. Then I decided that you should at least die in your own home, and I made them bring you here. So they brought you here, and Captain de Lussand, who rode up on the ambulance with us, spent his last few francs on bandages for the surgeon. The next day I went out and pawned most of my jewels to pacify the tradesmen and to pay the doctors and nurses. The doctors were very regular and very keen, but I could see that it was merely a matter of professional duty and devotion with them, and that they had no hope of doing any real good or of bringing you back to life. During the next few weeks the rest of my jewels went—for daily expenses, and the tradespeople were beginning to grow impatient and impertinent. Then came—Mayer.

(*She pauses a moment, but gives no other sign of feeling. She still wears the same look of love and pity. DE PERIGORD, who is lying back in his chair, leans forward, his elbows on his knees, his face in his hands.*)

He showed me the two notes and said he must have the money. I told him we had none, and then he said that you had given him a deed to the house as

security, and that he would take possession in three days.

(ERCOLE's lips move, as if he is talking to himself.)

I tried everything I could think of in those three days. The doctors still maintained that there was no hope, and I was resolved that you should not be disturbed. I tried to borrow from my lawyers on my dowry, but they said that that was in trust until your death and could not be accepted as security. I tried to get another mortgage on the house, but could get nothing like half the amount I needed. Then Mayer came back—

ERCOLE

Why did you not ask us, madame—the regiment, I mean?

CONSTANCE (without looking at ERCOLE)

The regiment had suffered heavily by that race. And this matter concerned my husband and me—and I could not ask for charity. He would wait no longer, he said. I offered him the whole of my dowry, but he said just what the lawyers had told me. I offered to marry him when you were—dead, but he said your death was not certain and was no better security than my dowry. There was only one thing he wanted—as the price of your peace. (She pauses a moment, then goes on steadily.) I obtained another day's grace from him and called Doyen and Lafranche out from Paris to see you. They both agreed that you could not live, but said you might linger for a few weeks yet. So, when he came the following day and I found that nothing could move him, I—paid the price.

(ERCOLE rises and goes up to the window, where he stands looking out. DE PERIGORD remains with his face hidden in his hands. CONSTANCE does not move except to lift the prayer book, which she has held in her left hand throughout, to her breast.

MERCIER enters at the right. He carries a small box wrapped in white paper and a bunch of white violets. He looks puzzled but bows to CONSTANCE, then comes down and places the box and flowers at DE PERIGORD's elbow.)

MERCIER

Madame! Colonel! Here are the flowers and chocolate, Captain, but there are no debts—there are no debts!

DE PERIGORD (sitting and looking at MERCIER like a man awaking out of a dream.)

No! There are no debts. There are no debts! (He resumes his former position.)

CONSTANCE (looking from MERCIER to DE PERIGORD in bewilderment)

Louis! What does this mean? M. Mercier!

MERCIER

It means, madame, that all your troubles are over.

CONSTANCE (sharply)

No riddles, please! What debts are you talking about? And how do they—or our troubles—concern you?

MERCIER (stiffly)

At your husband's request, madame, I have just been round the town for the purpose of paying the tradespeople, to whom we supposed—

CONSTANCE (impatiently)
But how could you pay?

MERCIER

Then I am the first to tell you? An uncle of Captain de Perigord, who emigrated to Australia forty years ago and then went to America, has recently died, leaving him sole heir to a million dollars.

CONSTANCE (looking at him for a moment with an utterly blank expression, succeeded by a look of horror which comes over her face)

No, no! It's not true! It can't be true.

(DE PERIGORD sits up and looks anxiously at CONSTANCE. ERCOLE turns round so as to face the others, but does not move from the window.)

When did you know of this? Today? Last week?

MERCIER

Six months ago.

THE SMART SET

CONSTANCE (*her voice rising*)
Six months ago! Six months!

MERCIER

I was afraid of arousing vain hopes,
and Captain de Perigord was in no
state—

CONSTANCE
Six months ago! (*She sinks into the Morris chair, hiding her face on the back and crying silently.*)

DE PERIGORD (*after a short pause, gently.*)

Connie! Connie!

(**CONSTANCE** *raises her head and looks at him.*)

Connie, will you leave us for a little
while? We have some business to at-
tend to.

CONSTANCE
Very well, dear. (*She rises and passes
behind DE PERIGORD, placing her
hand on his shoulder. He takes it and
kisses it slowly. MERCIER moves away
from the table to let her pass, but she
stops and looks at him wonderingly.
Then, with a shudder, she steps back and
comes round by DE PERIGORD again,
crossing in front of the table to the door at
the left. Halfway to the door she stops
and looks back at MERCIER.*)

Six months ago! (*She goes out, ERCOLE
coming down and holding the door open
for her. He bows deeply and respect-
fully as she passes. DE PERIGORD
looks after her and sits staring at the
closed door after she has gone.*)

ERCOLE (*coming across to the table)*
My boy—you can't blame her—

DE PERIGORD (*looking at him blankly
and holding up his hand*)

M. Mercier!

MERCIER

Captain!

DE PERIGORD
Is that money really mine?

MERCIER

Certainly.

DE PERIGORD
Can I dispose of it—by will, I mean?

MERCIER

Certainly.

DE PERIGORD

Then, kindly draw up a will—in as
few words as possible—leaving every-
thing to my wife. Colonel Ercole and
you will be sufficient witnesses, I think.

MERCIER

I could bring you the will for sig-
nature tomorrow.

DE PERIGORD

Can you prepare it yourself, here and
now?

MERCIER

Yes—I could, but—

DE PERIGORD

Then kindly do so. You will find
pens and paper on the desk.

(**MERCIER** *goes to the desk, sits down
and begins to write.*)

ERCOLE

What are you going to do?

DE PERIGORD

To make my will—and to ask you to
witness it.

ERCOLE

And after that?

DE PERIGORD

After that—I don't know yet.

(*They sit in silence for a few moments un-
til MERCIER finishes writing and
brings the paper down. DE PERI-
GORD reads it in silence.*)
This is perfectly valid?

MERCIER

Perfectly. You see, there is only the
one clause and nothing to complicate it,
so—

DE PERIGORD

Do I sign here? (*He takes the pen
from MERCIER and signs; ERCOLE and
MERCIER sign after him. DE PERIGORD
lies back in his chair with a sigh, staring
straight in front of him.*)

MERCIER

Is there anything else, Captain?

DE PERIGORD

Nothing else—for today. You might
come tomorrow morning—and bring
some money with you.

MERCIER

Very well. Good day, Captain.
Good day, Colonel Ercole!

ERCOLE

M. Mercier, for a lawyer to exercise due caution is a good thing, but when he adds to it consideration for what he imagines to be human feelings, God help us—and God forgive him! Good day, M. Mercier.

(MERCIER looks at him with an air of silent wonder, then bows and goes out at the right. ERCOLE turns back to DE PERIGORD.)

Now, my boy—

DE PERIGORD

No more, Colonel, please—no more!

ERCOLE

Forgive me. You must have had enough for one day. I'll be going now. I'll come again soon. Good-bye.

DE PERIGORD

Good-bye, Colonel. Yes, come again soon—very soon.

(ERCOLE goes to the door at the right, stops a moment and looks back at DE PERIGORD, then at the other door. He sighs and goes out, shaking his head. DE PERIGORD is left alone.)

Yes—come again—soon—very soon. (He sits perfectly still, talking to himself quietly and without expression.) Six months ago! Poor little girl! Yes—she paid the price—the price of my folly—my thoughtlessness. Six months ago! And now what is to be done? What did she buy—or mean to buy—when she—paid the price? She wanted a—peaceful death for me. And—for herself—afterwards? Easy enough to imagine that. But here I am, still alive—which was not in the bargain. That was not what she—paid for. Well, that can be remedied. And thereby—her honor, my honor and the honor of the regiment will all be served. Of course—of course!

(It has gradually grown darker, and now the sunset shows through the window. DE PERIGORD grips the arms of his chair, letting the rug slip to the floor, and with a great effort lifts himself to

his feet. He stands for a moment, supporting himself by the table, then slowly and painfully turns to go up stage. He catches hold of the back of the Morris chair to steady himself, and as he does so sees something lying on the seat. He picks it up, stooping with difficulty.)

Connie's prayer book! She must have forgotten it.

(He raises the book to his lips and notices a paper sticking out. He pulls it out and finds that there are two together. He unfolds them.)

My note—and De Lussand's! What shall be Mayer's—reward? One can't fight a Jew money lender! I ought to kill him, of course. But I can't wait! And God knows whether I should ever be able to stand alone again. The Colonel—or one of the others—will attend to Mayer for me.

(He puts the notes in the pocket of his dressing gown and goes on toward the desk, supporting himself on every piece of furniture that he passes. At the desk he pauses to rest, then opens a drawer and takes out a revolver. He looks at it, then puts it back, shaking his head.)

No; there's a better way!

(He goes on again, pausing at the window to look out at the dying sunset, then passes on to the cabinet. He opens the small cupboard in the top and takes out a small bottle, which he holds up to the window, then slips into his pocket. Then he finds a small black case, which he also puts in his pocket. He closes the cupboard door and goes back to his chair, passing down the other side of the stage. At the left door he pauses and listens as if hesitating, then shakes his head and goes on.)

Why should I disturb her? And saying good-bye would be too painful for both of us. Besides—it won't be for long, I know.

(He reaches his chair again at last and lets himself carefully down, pulling the rug up over his knees before sinking back exhausted. Then he takes the bottle and case out of his pocket and places

them on the table. From the case he takes a hypodermic syringe and fits it together. He pushes up his sleeve, exposing his forearm, fills the syringe and makes an injection.)

One brings relief from pain! (He repeats the operation.) Two bring sleep! (Repeats.) Three bring—peace! And (Repeats) four—that makes certain! (He replaces the stopper in the bottle and lays the syringe by its side, then pulls down his sleeve and lies back with a sigh.

Connie! Connie!

(There is a pause. The stage is practically dark now, being illuminated only by a faint glow from the gas log in the grate.

CONSTANCE enters at the left, standing for a moment in the doorway before closing the door behind her. She is in white, with her hair in two braids on her shoulder. She stands a moment listening.)

CONSTANCE

Louis! (To herself.) Is he asleep? He must be! (She crosses quietly to the table, trying to see him in the dark.) I

think I ought to wake him now—or he won't sleep tonight. Louis!

(She switches on the light and turns the lamp so as to shine on DE PERIGORD's face. Suddenly she sees the bottle and the syringe. She places her hand on his forehead, then on his heart, feeling for the beat. Then she stands up straight, staring in front of her with wide open eyes. After a moment she goes quickly up stage and draws the curtains at the window, then comes slowly back. Passing the table, she sees the white violets lying where MERCIER had left them. She picks them up and kisses them, then lays them on DE PERIGORD's knee, reaching over his shoulder. She takes up the bottle, holding it to the light to see if it contains enough, then slowly and methodically makes four injections. She comes down in front of DE PERIGORD and kisses him long on the lips, then sits down at his feet, and—taking the violets in one hand, lays her arms across his knees and drops her head on them.)

CURTAIN



LIFE

By JEAN WILDE CLARK

A SUN-CLAD road is ribboned to the hills,
Their softened crests abblend to blue of skies;
A velvet thrush his ecstasy acclaims,
A song from Nature's music memorized.

A blur of dust to baffle staggered steps,
The blue athirst with storm and dart alike;
A bird note stilled, and coiled beneath in stealth
A serpent stirs with upraised head to strike.



A LUXURY is something the other fellow thinks we could do without.

THE FROG AND THE PUDDLE

By AMY LYMAN PHILLIPS

MRS. J. BILLINGTON SMYTHE was at Palm Beach. At last, the dream of her life had come true.

She was going to take her rightful place in the society to which she belonged.

She knew all about society. She had rocked in her red plush rocker every Sunday and read. She read the social page in the *New York Earth*, and had not missed one for five years.

She had two trunks and a brand-new hat box. They all had her initials on. These were in black, picked out with red.

In the trunks were all her new clothes. There was a sheath gown of black satin; there was an empire gown of blue satin; there was a ball gown with low neck, of white satin. Satin was being worn this year.

In the hat box were four brand-new hats. One was a *cloche* from New York. One was her last summer's trimmed over—just as good as new. One was loaned her by a friend who was "not going out." And one was a white Hamburg lingerie.

There were many other things in the trunks. And in her real alligator-skin bag were her real coral beads, her dog collar from the Parisian Diamond Co., and various other jewels.

Her wardrobe had been the envy of Shickshinny. Half the town had come to see her off. And pinned into a chamois bag hung around her neck by a blue ribbon, were five hundred dollars in crisp, yellow-backed bills.

She arrived in state at the Royal Poinsettia. One colored bellboy ran to take her alligator bag. Another

took her umbrella. And there was another hovering about who would have taken something had there been anything else to take.

She wrote her name on the register. Then she asked for a room. The clerk ran his eye over a board full of little pink and blue and white tickets. Then he selected No. 1907 for her. It was sixteen dollars a day. Mrs. J. Billington Smythe gasped. But she was game. The room was nine feet by fourteen. It overlooked the kitchen wing. But from the window she could see a palm tree and the Breakers. She thought it was grand.

When her trunks came, she dressed with great care. She put on her new, high-heeled, patent-leather slippers. She put on the dog collar. And after she had pinned on all her puffs, she donned the blue satin empire gown. She looked very elegant.

The bellboy told her dinner was at seven. She gave him five cents, feeling very generous. At seven, she swept down to the rotunda. It was empty. Then she swept into the dining room. It was nearly empty. But she was hungry. For dinner at home was at noon and supper at half past five.

She ordered an elaborate dinner. She had soup and roast beef and mashed potatoes and tomato salad and ice cream and a glass of milk. She did not dare order the things with the foreign names. She did not know what they were.

When she had nearly finished, a party of four people was seated at her table. Two women and two men. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like these. The men were very good-look-

ing. One of them looked her way. She smiled and said it was a fine evening. He nodded. Then the two women put up their lorgnettes and stared at her. Then they turned to the men and giggled. Mrs. J. Billington Smythe felt very uncomfortable. She thought they were making fun of her. They were. Somehow, the blue satin gown looked very cheap to her beside the frocks from the Rue de la Paix.

She strolled out into the rotunda and sat down in a green chair. Several nice-looking people passed her and she bowed. They did not return her bow. She felt queer. Pretty soon she got up and strolled some more, down toward the shops in the corridor. But no one spoke to her except a girl who thought she wanted to buy something.

She said she didn't. Then they tittered and looked her over from head to foot. And she felt that they knew the dog collar was not made of real diamonds. And the blue satin empire gown looked hopelessly frumpy beside the others she saw there.

No one took any notice of her. No one spoke to her. She felt lonesome. Then she found a desk with paper on it stamped with the coat of arms of the hotel. She sat down and wrote letters. She wrote to everyone she knew. Then she bought some souvenir post cards and wrote to some more people. She felt very stylish, using such grand stationery.

Then there was nothing more to do, so she went to bed. Early the next morning she put on her white lingerie gown and the white lingerie hat and started out. She walked down to the beach. She saw the bathing at the swimming pool. She heard the band play. She picked up some sea shells to put on the parlor mantel shelf. She picked a palmetto leaf to make a palm-leaf fan. And she bought a thirty-five-cent box of "the oranges you promised to send home" for Mr. Billington Smythe, whose name was plain Bill Smith in Shickshinny.

She spoke to several ladies, but they were all haughty and passed on. She thought she would like to have a flir-

tation with one of the good-looking men on the pier. When she smiled at him, he said, "Ah, there, my orange blossom!" which didn't sound elegant. So she turned her back and walked away. He was the swimming teacher.

She walked back to the hotel and ate luncheon. No one spoke to her. She sat around for a while. Then she went upstairs and put on a white skirt and a peekaboo shirtwaist and another hat. Then she went down again to walk in the grove. She saw people drinking tea. She had some, but it did not taste very good. She was lonesome. No one looked at her. All the other women were exquisitely gowned and groomed. She felt cheap and countrified. She heard one woman say to another, "Look at that freak!" They looked at her through their *faces-à-main* and giggled. She felt lonesome. She went in and had a good cry in her room all alone. She put on the white satin ball gown and put some red nail paste on her cheeks and did her hair all over. Then she sailed into the dining room.

The head waiter gave her a table in a corner all alone with her back to the others. After dinner, she went into the ballroom and sat down. She was dying to dance. No one asked her. Finally, she spoke to a young girl and asked her to dance with her. The young girl looked at her haughtily and said, "I do not know you, madam." Then she went to her room and cried some more. She wished she were back with Bill Smith in Shickshinny.

She packed the blue empire gown in her new trunk. She packed the white satin ball gown in her trunk. She put the new hat and the lingerie hat in the hat box. Then she cried some more.

Then she made up her mind. She would leave Florida, and she would go back to Pennsylvania, and she would visit Flora Ann Shinn at Skedunk. She sent a telegram to Flora. Flora wired back, "Come at once."

Next day at noon, she paid her bill. It was forty-seven dollars and sixty-one cents. She gave ten cents to her waiter, five cents to the elevator

boy and twenty-five cents to the porter. And nothing to the chambermaid.

She arrived two days later in Skedunk. Flora met her at the train. She was the sensation of the winter in Skedunk. She wore the blue satin dress to the donation party at the minister's. She wore the white satin to the Odd Fellows' ball. It was the only low-necked one there. She wore the black satin sheath gown to the necktie party and went to supper with the new doctor. She was invited twice to dinner, seven times to supper or "tea," went to six dances, a donation party, a paring bee, a quilting bee, a linen shower, a box party and three church sociables and an oyster supper and many other functions. She had a good time. And she was never lonesome a single minute. And everybody was crazy to hear all about Palm Beach.

She was the Real Thing in Skedunk. And she felt for the first time in her life that she was a success. She did not know any of the society people at Palm Beach. But she described them and what they wore by what she had read in the newspapers.

When, at the end of three weeks, she went home to Bill Smith and the hired girl and the canary bird and the red plush rocking chair, she had three hundred and fifty dollars to put in the bank toward her trip to Europe. And she had the three gowns and the four hats all ready for summer. She was invited everywhere. Everyone wanted to hear all about Palm Beach, where she had spent a month. Again she was the Real Thing.

MORAL: It is better to be the Real Thing and shine in Skedunk and Shick-shinny than to be a nonentity at Palm Beach.



THE MAY

By ALOYSIUS COLL

A MAIDEN wild, of witching beauty rare,
She wooed me in a field of sun. She blew
Red blossoms on my lips, and softly drew
My face into a mist of golden hair.
The gods of song a moment fluttered there—
The butterflies of music. Robins knew
No sweeter harps; the violet and the rue
Were bubbles from her singing heart laid bare.
She caught my hands with kisses to her lips,
And warmed them to her breast, whereon a rose
In rival dreams of love adoring lay;
Whereat, as some befreighted bee that slips
Into the fairest lily heart that blows,
I sank content into the lap of May!



CONVENTIONALITY is the mother of ennui.

LITERARY MAXIMS

By STUART B. STONE

THE saddest words of tongue or pen are these: "The editor regrets, etc." Who steals my books steals trash. Ask the critic.

All is not well that ends well—but some editors insist on happy endings.

A cheque deferred maketh the poet sick.

Train up a heroine in the way she should go, and when the rattling, swinging climax comes, she will not lose her pretty, red-gold head.

There is no new thing between the cover in eighteen colors by Paletteslapper, '10, and the full page ad. of the Cold Kettle Flour Corporation on the back of the magazine.

A living space writer is better than a dead producer of classics.

Sonnet upon sonnet, rondeau upon rondeau; here an acceptance—there a rejection.

Man shall not live by his literary work alone.

Consider the headliners in the Table of Contents, how they get a dollar a word; they toil not in sluggish, rambling phrases, neither do they spin a twenty-word idea into six thousand words of heavy prose.

Rejections are odious.

It is a wise poet that knows his own weak feet.

A plot, a plot! My inkstand for a plot!



JUST A NOD IN PASSING

MURRAYHILL—They say fortune raps on every man's door at some time.

BROADWAY—Well, she hasn't so much as called me up on the telephone!

THE DOVE AND THE SCARLET POPPY

By MARION LOUDON HARGROVE

THE Man was thirty-five, and had tasted of life in all its various phases. Paris was to him no idle word. Whether it wearied him he could not say, for he knew not which self he was. Each day brought to him conflicting moods.

Today he was old and weary, and the young girl at his side charmed and allured him. She might have been a nun, judging by her pure face and downcast eyes. The silken lashes on the rose-leaf cheek curled upward like a cherub's. The small, straight nose, with the slightly scornful nostrils, said nothing could tempt her hard little virgin heart. But the mouth relented, and the chin said there might be times and seasons. But the Man had studied types long enough to know that Love had never kissed those carmine lips, nor Passion brushed the bloom from those damask cheeks. Her youth and beauty held him spellbound.

"Little one," he said, "may I come again tomorrow?"

"Yes, if you still care to," she answered in a sweet tone, shadowed with sadness.

"Farewell, till then, little Dove."

The twilight came and the night. And with the night came Desire. She sped and entered softly the inner room of the Man's soul. He was no longer calm and peaceful and full of thought. Swift burning fires awoke in him. He could not hear the dulcet notes of the Dove, for the Scarlet Poppy flung her mystic veil upon him. The perfume of her tresses stole over his senses and his soul listened.

His throbbing pulse urged him to the gay streets. The lights of the cafés along the Boulevard beckoned to him. He pressed his questioning thoughts far behind him and stepped inside.

The Scarlet Poppy was lost in the mazes of an intricate dance. Now and then a flesh tint revealed itself through the silver gauze, now and then a gleam of witching eyes. Finally she sank in a billow of foamy lace. The lights were lowered and he sought the entrance to await her coming. She came out enveloped in a huge, furry coat, a filmy scarf thrown about her head and face. She was completely veiled.

"Let us walk to the seats in the Champs Elysées. I am tired of the music and the lights. Oh, this air is so sweet, and see how vast and wonderful the heavens are! No, I shall dance no more."

"Let us be seated, Glorious One."

So they sat together in the starlight beneath the tall Lombardy poplars.

"Are those little feet weary of the dance?" he asked tenderly. "I will tuck them up warmly in your great-coat. Now tell me why you shall dance no more."

"I am tired of it all. What do I care for those smooth, effeminate faces, all alike, with their watery eyes and perfumed hair? I hate them all. I hate their flowers, their looks, their smiles. What do they care for me, the *real* me? There is nobody to care." She buried her face in her hands with a sob.

THE SMART SET

"Don't cry, Beautiful One, my Scarlet Poppy. Come, let us be gay! I will take you anywhere, anywhere you shall choose. Let me dry those tears. Those eyes were never meant for weeping."

"I am tired tonight. I am not gay, but oh, so sad! But go and leave me. I shall not mind being alone with the night and the stars."

"No, little Weary Feet, it shall be as you say, for you have cast over me a spell. I am no longer the gay mortal who brought you here. And you seem no longer the merry sprite who but a few moments ago was whirling so dizzily. Now there are shadows in those violet eyes. You are serious as the little nun I met this morning. What has changed you? Has your rival in the dance learned a new step, or has she received more flowers, or found a new color which you cannot wear? Come, tell me!"

"It is none of those tragedies. It is only a poor little comedy, but you are the only friend I have. There is not one in that mad throng whom I would allow to touch my hand. They think I am gay. They hear rumors of wild revelry. Gaiety? Revels? That is enough for them. What do they know of aching hearts? Night after night I have danced for their amusement and to care for a wornout father. But he is dead now. I have danced my last dance. I have sung my last song. Oh, I want I know not what, a home, with gray twilights, an open fire, loving voices—Oh, I want—" Again her voice ended in a sob.

With a strange quiver in his lips, he drew her toward him. She half resisted, then let him press her close again, as though a great burden had

fallen from her. For a moment they were silent. Then he spoke.

"Listen, Scarlet Poppy. I, too, am a wanderer from friends and home. I have been torn with doubt and anguish. I can resist no longer. I need you. I want only you. Sometimes I had thought to wed a convent child," and a vague look of pain crossed his face, "so that I might renew my youth and innocence. But that is all past. There are scars that only love can cover. You are Love. Though your little feet have touched the mire, they are not soiled. I love them. I love you. Take me and make of me what you will. Seal my prayer with a kiss, love." He folded his warm lips close in hers and took her soul away.

"Tell me," she said, "have you not met the child of your dreams? Tell me of her."

"There is not much to tell. I was weary with nights of unrest, of unknown longings. Early each morning I walked in the park. And there each morning in the sunshine was a young girl. She might have had a lily in her hand, so nunlike and innocent was she. She wore a simple little gown of mauve with violet shadows. I called her my Morning Dove. But enough, my love; she will not miss me. I am yours, for all time yours, my Scarlet Poppy of the Night."

She gently disengaged herself and rose. She threw off her heavy coat and flung her scarf aside. There, before his wondering eyes, was his Morning Dove.

"My own," she whispered in kisses, "your soul is white. Do you not know that all women are alike? There is no Dove, no Scarlet Poppy. They are both; they are neither. There is only love. Kiss me again."



WHOSO mocketh a married man, let him take heed; for a fool is born every minute, and the mocker himself falleth by the wayside.

LA MÈRE

Par J. H. ROSNY

LOUIS RAMIÈRES déposa sa fourchette et cessa de manger. Il avait l'air dur et maussade; un grand pli creusait son front lisse. C'était un joli jeune homme par la chevelure bien plantée, l'œil taillé avec art, des joues fines et la structure correcte. Sa mère le considérait avec crainte et admiration. D'avoir de tout temps souffert pour lui et par lui, elle l'aimait davantage. Et elle mettait en lui son orgueil, son espérance, tout le présent et tout l'avenir.

Pour la troisième fois, elle l'interrogeait. Il se décida à répondre:

— Il vaudrait mieux n'en pas parler, puisque nous ne pouvons qu'en souffrir l'un et l'autre. Enfin, puisque tu le veux. J'ai vu tantôt, au cercle, le père d'Hélène. Il sait bien entendu, que j'aime sa fille, ce qui n'est rien . . . Mais il sait aussi qu'elle m'aime. Alors, il m'a parlé très franchement. Il me la donnerait si j'apportais deux cent cinquante mille francs, qui constitueraient une part d'association dans sa maison . . . du quinze, du vingt pour cent.

Il se tut, plein d'amertume. Mme. Ramières réfléchissait, éperdue. C'est vrai que c'était le sauvetage et pour toute la vie. La maison Hugot Lambert était quelque chose d'aussi solide, en son genre, que la Banque de France. D'ailleurs, tout autour, une famille richissime dont Hélène devait hériter un jour.

— Ah! soupira-t-elle . . . si nous les avions!

— Mais nous ne les avons pas, fit-il durement.

Ils les avaient possédés, cependant, et même plus du double. C'est à Louis

qu'ils avaient passé. Il avait vécu sept années formidables. Rien n'avait pu modérer sa fougue, et comme elle était incroyablement faible, même un peu imprévoyante, Mme. Ramières n'avait rien su lui refuser.

Quand il admit — car il s'était obstiné longtemps à croire que sa mère lui cachait des ressources — quand il admit, vaincu par l'évidence, que la ruine était proche, il eut un coup de désespoir. Ce désespoir le mena au jeu. Pendant plusieurs mois, il vécut en halluciné, sûr qu'il allait rattraper la fortune perdue. Puis, ce fut la fin, il n'y eut plus d'argent liquide, plus même de bijoux précieux. Rien ne demeurait qu'une rente viagère, dont le capital était inaccessible jusqu'à la mort de Mme. Ramières.

Cela l'avait dégrisé; il avait soudain montré de la prudence. Il menait maintenant une existence froide et calculée, attentif seulement à garder l'élégance impeccable du costume. Il avait d'ailleurs l'instinct le plus sûr de cette élégance; par là même, il savait se la procurer à bien meilleur compte que les gens qui s'en rapportent aux fournisseurs. En sorte qu'extérieurement rien ne trahissait sa déchéance. Il continuait à fréquenter assidûment le monde, qui ne lui coûtait que quelques sacs de bonbons et quelques fleurs; il fuyait les lieux de dépense. Toutefois, pour sauver la face, il n'avait pas déserté son club.

De son côté, Mme. Ramières s'appliquait passionnément à l'économie. Elle réalisait ces miracles que savent réaliser les femmes qui ne cessent de s'occuper de leur intérieur. La ruine demeu-

rait inaperçue. L'on soupçonnait tout au plus quelques perles menues.

— C'est vrai, nous ne les avons pas! soupira Mme. Ramières.

Et elle jetait à son fils un regard humble et tendre qui demandait pardon.

— Ah! reprit-elle, si je pouvais céder le capital de ma rente . . .

Les yeux de Louis flambèrent. L'être violent et avide qu'il était se peignit tout entier sur sa face contractée et sa bouche presque sauvage. Ce fut une tempête de désir qui se termina dans une rage:

— Mais tu ne peux pas! dit-il d'un ton brutal. Alors, à quoi bon en parler?

— Ah! fit-elle plaintivement, ma mort seule . . .

Leurs regards se rencontrèrent. Dans l'éclair de cette minute, elle vit distinctement que celui pour qui elle avait fait tous les sacrifices et consenti à tous les chagrin, l'être qu'elle aimait plus qu'elle-même, aurait été heureux de cette mort . . . Elle détourna la tête, épouvantée; ses yeux se remplirent de larmes.

Tout le soir, pendant qu'il était sorti, elle ne cessa d'y songer. C'était, au tréfonds, quelque chose qui déjà la tuitait, l'arrêt d'un juge mystérieux et implacable. Elle se disait que maintenant elle verrait le souhait dans chacun des actes de Louis et chacune de ses paroles; le plus intime de son existence en serait empoisonné. Comme elle n'avait depuis bien longtemps, plus de sentiments qui ne fussent un reflet des sentiments de son fils, chaque fois qu'elle

goûterait une joie innocente, chaque fois qu'il lui viendrait une heure douce, tout se glacerait soudain à l'idée sinistre. Alors, c'était fini! Il n'y aurait plus de soleil du matin, plus de roses, plus de crépuscule d'été sur la plage ou la terrasse plus d'intimité fine au foyer d'hiver, plus de livres, ni de voyages, ni de présent, ni d'avenir. Elle serait jusqu'à sa dernière heure celle dont la mort est attendue, celle dont la fin doit faire le bonheur de sa descendance. Etais-ce encore vivre? . . .

Le soir passa, minuit pleura sur Saint-François-Xavier, et Mme. Ramières était toujours là, sous le bloc de la destinée. Elle attendait maintenant le retour de Louis avec un triste cœur qui s'éveillait par saccades. Lorsqu'il ouvrit la porte du corridor, elle se dressa, elle marcha à sa rencontre; et pour avoir un baiser, un baiser franc et pressé que filial, elle balbutia:

— J'ai un projet, mon grand garçon, quelque chose à quoi nous n'avions pas songé . . . Espère . . . et embrasse bien ta vieille maman!

Il la considéra d'abord surpris, mais, comme tous les êtres, il était prompt à l'illusion: de songer que peut-être il aurait la fiancée et la fortune, son cœur s'enfla d'une tendresse, il rendit sans compter l'étreinte.

— Demain! Je te dirai demain! s'écriait-elle en se sauvant dans sa chambre.

La porte verrouillée, en hâte, ne voulant pas perdre la tiédeur des lèvres du fils sur sa joue, elle ouvrit la petite pharmacie, elle y saisit le flacon de laudanum et, d'une grande gorgée, fit disparaître l'obstacle qui barrait la route de Louis Ramières.



TRISTESSE

DIEU parle; il faut qu'on lui réponde.
Le seul bien qui me reste au monde
Est d'avoir quelquefois pleuré.

THE MORALS OF THE DRAMA LADIES

By GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

ALTHOUGH I live in a New York bachelor apartment hotel, I confess I know nothing at all about women. I have always believed that women were small bodies of intuition entirely surrounded by clothes, and in my innocent way, that for every bad woman in the world there were several thousand good ones. The majority of women, according to the way I have always looked at it, were beings of very ordinary intellect, simply analyzed passions, prodigious appetites and a marked inclination to graft. The exception to the rule, experience has taught me, has been the woman who was really no different from the rest, but who, during a period in which I have been inordinately carefree and happy, took advantage of my temporary good nature to fool me. Subsequent dispassionate analysis proved to me that what I had mistaken for a show of intellectuality was nothing more than her ability to listen to me talk and approve of what I said; that what I had taken for an alluring yet baffling emotional mysteriousness in her was absolutely nothing more than a supreme and silent wonderment at what I was trying to get at; that what I had thought was a gratifyingly birdlike appetite was only a temporary attack of indigestion; and that, in the end, she was precisely like all the others, only that she played her cards more sagaciously.

Resting secure in my belief, I had always taken further refuge in self-argument as to the ridiculous ease of the woman problem by assuring myself that

even the very Balzac who understood woman from puffs to pumps got his exact ideas of the whole sex by an intimate study of just *one* of their number, and that, like Balzac, almost all the other great analysts of the feminine soul have found everything they needed or cared to know in a single member of the fair species. All the rest were like that one. So, thought I, why bother? I preferred to get my information canned, so to speak. One might learn all he needed to know from a copy of Rochebrune. Besides, a book is so much less expensive than restaurant checks and taxicabs.

And so I sailed along tranquil in my self-satisfactory judgment. Byron, I remembered, knew women, oh, so little, despite his frequent dalliance in the Atlantic City of his day. Why venture out? A loose dressing gown and slippers, a deep chair bathed in the soft glow of the shaded reading lamp, cigars and pipe on the tabourette close by, and De Musset! No malodorous perfumes to offend the nostrils, no wide hat brims to be poked into the eyes, no bother to think up one's share of innocuous conversations, no having to order rare foods out of season, no having to overfee waiters for the looks of the thing—in short, no discomfort whatever! Study women by mail, as it were. Learn all about them through the correspondence school of literature, with once in a while an indulgence in a little tour of investigation to convince oneself he has not missed any of the fine points.

In spite of all this, however, I confess

I must know nothing about women. They must be insolvable, wonderful beings if we are to take some of the playwrights seriously. God made woman, and some dramatists do their best to remake her. They "understand" women so subtly that they manipulate her dramatically in ways their prosaic fellow men *cannot* understand. They take the common or garden variety of female and try to hothouse her into the uncommon or gardenia variety. They seek to make dramatic mountains out of emotional molehills. Where one Pinero knows his Iris and his Paula, a dozen Pinheads botch their Gwendolyns and Gladyses. The able dramatist knows women are the most usual, most regular things in the scheme of the universe. The tyros don't. The master playwright may choose a so-called bad woman and paint her in colors true and vivid—as she must be painted. The tyro comes along and makes a daub. His bad woman isn't logically bad—she's just downright unnaturally rotten.

To say that a man "knows women" is accepted to mean only that the man in question has a thorough understanding of female wickedness. Why, for Heaven's sake, cannot the phrase cover the good in women as well—at least, if only as far as playwrights are concerned? There must be drama in good women, too. Barrie and the handful of his cult have proved it. The playhouses may be situated in the wicked West Forties, but the real houses—the homes—are not. Furnished rooms and bare emotions occupy only one block on the Broadway of life. And even in the case of the one block, there is often a Little Church Around the Corner.

These thoughts have been inspired by the women in some of the plays that have been presented recently in New York. But, then, afterthought compels one to regard these creatures of the playwrights' pens not as women, but rather as orchidaceous freaks. And so, after all, one probably knows more about women than one believed he did. From a native horticultural viewpoint, at least, the American Beauty is merely a gradual development of the May-

flower, and the Mayflower, as we know from history, sprang from very plain Dutch soil that had not been fertilized by any of the possibly more complex Continental emotionalism. Yes, and more than this: there must be—and there always must have been—hundreds of thousands of good wives and mothers, even in France!

NOT excepting even "Seven Days" and "The Lottery Man," "**MR. AND MRS. DAVENTRY**" was the best farce that New York has seen in many years. Intended as a drama of deep emotion, the affair turned out to be the most mirth provoking, side splitting entertainment divulged to public view in the last three seasons.

As a farce, it was splendid. As a drama, it was awful. The program had the effrontery to attribute the play to Oscar Wilde, when the only connection Wilde possibly could have had with it was to recommend to Frank Harris, its author, a good place where he might have the manuscript typewritten. It has been said that Wilde collaborated with Harris in the building of the play. He did not. The genius who wrote "*Lady Windermere's Fan*" could have done no such thing.

But, bad as the play was, the acting was even worse. Miss Constance Crawley, the second worst actress a New York audience has paid to behold in the past few years, was presented in the leading role. Miss Crawley is a tall lady of toothpick proportions who just can't help her temperament when acting. She is precisely the kind of actress who would score a tremendous success in a Western stock company, if she has not done so already. Miss Crawley is superbly emotional. In the third act of the play on the dissecting table, one of the characters suggested a cup of tea. Any other woman in the world, on or off the stage, either would have said simply "Yes," or "No, thank you; I don't care for any." But not so with Miss Crawley! When tea was mentioned she rolled her eyes to heaven and in a voice that was filled with pathos, sobbed her refusal. She was so eter-

nally unhappy. The rest of the cast was equally pathetic. Arthur Maude, as Mr. Daventry, committed suicide three acts too late, and Edwin August, as the lover, supported the star in a worthy manner—with all the dread significance that is implied. All in all, it was the most disastrous example of acting that has come to my attention since the neighbors' children gave a show in our barn many years ago. And I have seen some of the present Ben Greet players!

The pleasant evening's pastime had to do with Mr. Daventry's unmistakable preference for blonde hair, Mrs. Daventry's being black. The first act introduced the yellow *coiffure* into the drawing-room of the Daventry's country home. The second act brought Daventry and the *coiffure* up a flight of stairs to Mrs. Daventry's boudoir, where from behind a screen the latter lady learned of her husband's base deceit. The third act made Mrs. Daventry determine to flee to Nice with her lover, and the fourth act, according to one of the ushers, who gave me the information at the subsequent production at the same theater, made the errant and repentant husband shoot himself. Regarding the details of the last act the usher was not entirely certain. She told me she was speaking only from hearsay, inasmuch as she had not had the heart to remain to the end of the catastrophe. She referred me to the doorkeeper, but that individual also assured me that he had had important engagements elsewhere all through the week before the fourth act came round. A patient and exhaustive investigation has revealed the fact, nevertheless, that there was a fourth act. One of the actors told the janitor of the theater so. To give credit where credit is due, however, it must be stated in all fairness that considerable praise was due the efficient work of Mr. Thomas Brown. Mr. Brown is the Hackett Theater's electrician, and he managed to ring down the successive curtains as quickly as he dared without losing his job.

"*CHILDREN OF DESTINY*," a four-act drama by Sydney Rosenfeld, was pre-

sented at the Savoy Theater for two weeks during Lent, and is now playing a long engagement in the storehouse. At the risk of sacrificing the confidence of those of my readers who are firm in their opinion that an early storehouse grave is a positive indication of a play's lack of merit, and that a dozen adverse professional reviews unanimously pronouncing a play worthless are further positive proof, I must confess the fact that I considered this particular drama not only interesting but in the main well conceived and sufficiently well acted to have deserved a better fate. And I say this fully cognizant of the several flaws in the play's logic and physical psychology and in the foggy conception of the more elusive phases of some of the characters' mental make-up.

"*CHILDREN OF DESTINY*," if mnemonic statistics err not, bore a surface resemblance to a play called "*Moonbeams*," that similarly failed of success back in the '80's. Its story concerned a disappointed man and woman, who, fast treading the road to mental, moral and physical ruin, met near the end of the trail and, through a mutual and honest love, succeeded in retracing their footsteps to respectability. One of the chief criticisms lodged against the play was a disapprobation of the rather flowery and somewhat plumose language that had been placed in the mouths of the leading characters as well as of the tendency to make the characters fatuously and amateurishly epigrammatic. While, to be sure, such verbiage as "I will sell my honor in the market place" is more provocative of an amiable grin than of any quivering sympathy for its feminine exclainer, and while such half-stewed epigrams as "Virtue is merely inexperience" rather cause the auditor to murmur "*Fiddlesticks*," the playwright's offense in this direction was pardonable because of its comparative sporadicness. I cannot hold it against the dramatist that he saw fit to create his characters with a dash of poetry in their hearts. There are such you know—yes, even in this cold, prosaic, unromantic, money grubbing world of ours. Not everyone—in

or out of drama—speaks in the language of Eugene Walter's pen. That the general theatergoing public prefers the Walter-worded heroes and heroines is, I submit, quite another matter.

The central figure in the play was a young woman named Rose Hamlin, whose fiancé had jilted her because of a stain on her parentage. With her lover snatched from her by fate and the world's finger of scorn pointed at her, she cried out her determination to follow the one path left open to her—the great winding scarlet road. The trail took her to clinking Monte Carlo, where, to every appearance, she had incorporated her "honor" with herself as treasurer and a score of roués as stockholders. Her beauty had drawn to her princes and dukes and the leading figures in the gay whirl of Monaco. While Du Barrying with this reveling set of masculine nyctanthes, chance brought her into contact with Edwin Ford. Ford's faith in all women had been shattered through the faithlessness of one, and he, like Rose, had chosen to forget in the crimson country. Thus these children of destiny met, the man broken in spirit and seeking solace in absinthe and fast women, the woman broken in heart and losing herself in those night bloomming flower beds that know no rosemary. The chord of sympathy was sounded, and Rose, feeling Ford's silent soul cry, whispered: "Tonight, dear—come tonight to my villa. There shall we live to forget; there shall we forget to live." And the scene shifted to Rose's boudoir.

But, stop, dear reader; halt thy blushes. For, after thirty minutes of the most audacious presentation my eyes have witnessed outside of book covers, it developed that Rose had remained "pure" in spite of princes, dukes and leading figures, and that Ford, respecting her virtue, on hearing dashed determinedly out of the room. And the next day they were married.

The play, as may be presumed, was extremely daring but it was *not* salacious. At intervals it taxed the worldly credulities heavily enough to bring about a revolution of doubt, yet not for

a moment did it cease to hold one's attention. The dénouement of the esoteric third act, wherein Rose asserts that she has trailed her petticoats through the golden Monte Carlo mud without so much as allowing a speck of the dirt to cling to them, came dangerously near making one laugh boisterously, but—it didn't. Frequently, too, in other spots one felt a rebellious snicker fighting its way downward from a calm mind to the lips but, somehow or other, the snicker would be ambushed halfway along the line. And yet it may have been these very unborn snickers in the audiences that brought the play to its early death. An appreciation of his own bright epigrammatic sentence, "Knowledge to woman means bitterness, to man progress," will undoubtedly help the present playwright henceforth. The knowledge, which he undoubtedly has, as to the futility of attempting to dramatize the great exception to the human rule, must work for his own subsequent playwriting progress.

ABOVE all others, the favorite belief of the great American public is that every millionaire's son has something wrong with him in the region of the brain. If a millionaire's son goes down into the slums in an honest effort to find out and better the condition of the poor, the great American public—whom one millionaire father once damned—get even by sneering that he is a "parlor Socialist." That word "parlor" is relied on as the final insult. If a millionaire's son determines to learn all about his father's railroads by beginning at the bottom and working in the shops, the great American public taps its head with its forefinger knowingly and looks wise. And, if a millionaire's son writes a play and has it produced, the great American public moves *en masse* to Missouri, entrenches itself behind a doubly critical set of binoculars and shouts its familiar cry: "Go ahead—we just *dare* you to entertain us!"

This is written neither in sorrow nor in anger, and neither in defense nor in derision of Preston Gibson, the wealthy

Washingtonian, whose play, "THE TURNING POINT," was presented at the Hackett Theater. The fact that Mr. Gibson has money in the bank makes not the slightest difference in the world to me as far as judgment of his play goes. But the fact that it should be inferred—as it has been—that simply because a man is exceedingly wealthy he cannot, therefore, write a play, is as entirely ridiculous as to presume—after the manner of office boy graduates who have risen to some position—that a college education is valueless. The grim record that few millionaires have ever written plays that were worth a hang, and the further grim record that a college education often succeeds in accomplishing no other end than teaching its recipient how to Guzzle, tie a cravat properly and spend money, should not weaken the argument against the unwarranted prejudice in the whole thing.

Structurally, "THE TURNING POINT" is not a good play. It is as disjointed as a presentation of "society tableaux." Some of its characters are sketched lightly with the end of a burnt match rather than with the broad, firm stroke of charcoal. And yet, Mr. Gibson has managed, in spite of its faults, to evolve a play of which he need not feel in the least ashamed. The early efforts of many of the leading dramatists of today—yes, even the less opulent dramatists—were no better than this metropolitan *coup d'essai* of a self-confessed millionaire. They probably were a hundred times worse. Mr. Gibson, in the second act of his play, has worked his characters up to a curtain climax that is quite as effective as anything seen on the metropolitan stage this season, and in his third act has evolved a situation that shows he is no bungler in the matter of the trick of suspense.

The general plot of "THE TURNING POINT" is less interesting than its several incidental interruptions. The story concerns itself with the disentangling of a twisted skein of stock manipulation, love affairs, seduction and—epigrams. Oh, those epigrams! There were hundreds of them, of all shapes, kinds and previous conditions of servitude. In

fact, there were so many that Mr. Gibson got tired writing them and so borrowed a few dozen from Oscar Wilde. When accused of this pilfering in the public prints, the playwright made reply by calmly assuring his audience that, even if his pen had answered the call of the Wilde, it was to be remembered that two of his fellow dramatists, Shakespeare and Rostand, also had been charged at different times with having been dramatic kleptomaniacs. And Mr. Gibson vocally italicized the word "also." It will be observed that, beyond everything else, Mr. Gibson is a modest man. Miss Grace Filkins, in the role of a rather gay widow, was the best of the generally capable cast that presented the play. A dark scene in the last act, reminiscent of a similar episode in "The Climbers," gave one of the female *dramatis personæ* an opportunity to indulge in the sobby exploitation of one of those pieces of theatric composition that are so dear to the hearts of all beginners in playwriting—the familiar confession of blameless innocence led astray.

THE New Theater's production of Maeterlinck's magnificent miracle play, "SISTER BEATRICE," is the finest presentation of the current theatrical season. I do not hesitate at superlatives. I fear, indeed, that my homely pen will fail me in my attempt to set down the praise that is due this superb dramatic effort. Rarely in the theater of America is one privileged to witness so masterfully beautiful a performance, a performance that, above every other performance that has preceded it, indicates with a not to be mistaken positiveness the rapid stride that the New Theater is making toward its self-outlined goal. Here is a production that will never cause a dramatic critic to be barred thereafter from the theater in which it is presented! If the New Theater produces any more such entirely meritorious plays in so splendid a fashion, its management may rather have to place the ban on the reviewers for overgushing. It is a poor rule that does not work both ways. Of Miss

THE SMART SET

Edith Wynne Matthison, the leading figure in the interpretation, I wish to say—and I want the printer to put this in italics: *Hers was a most glorifying performance, a portrayal away beyond the reach of any other English speaking actress these eyes have ever seen, an inspirational representation that carried with it a divine spark—in short, a masterpiece of the true acting art.*

"SISTER BEATRICE," founded on a legend known to many, relates the story of a nun, young and lovely, who feels the cry of worldly love in her heart, and who in trembling joy and fear prays to the sacred image of the Virgin to advise her what course to pursue. Shall she remain true to her vows, or shall she go forth into the big world beyond the convent walls to tread the rose leaves of happiness with her prince who loves her? The Virgin gives no sign; the nun steals away; the convent doors close. Thrice the light above the statue of the Virgin flashes and slowly the statue comes to life. The Virgin has come to take the place of Sister Beatrice. "There is no sin," she says, "where there is love." For twenty years the erring sister's place is thus filled and each of her duties done. And then the nun, now pale and weak and weary to death, returns. She has traversed the torn alleys of sin and has come to seek forgiveness at the Virgin's shrine. She finds the shrine as she had left it on the dawning day a score of years before. She finds nothing changed. The nuns believe she has been with them constantly, and refuse to take her mumbled confession as anything other than the outpouring of an enfeebled mind. Slowly the death coils of the world's long strain encircle her and she sinks to the couch the sisters have prepared for her on the convent floor. Gradually the image of the Virgin becomes bathed in a soft, divine glow. Silence throws its cloak over those gathered about. And Sister Beatrice's voice grows fainter and fainter until it fades to nothing in the presence of God. But no meager words can convey a proper idea of the wonderfully moving story as this stage unfolds it. And no mere dra-

matic critic can convey a proper idea of the reverently gorgeous performance of Miss Matthison, who not only twists the heart chords to tears with her Sister Beatrice, but stills a vast assemblage into respectful awe before her marvelously and delicately conceived picture of the Divine Mother.

Every member of the company presenting the play is individually praiseworthy, as is, too, George Foster Platt, the producer. His stage painting at the close of the first act, showing the miracle of the thongs turned to flowers and of the Virgin come to take the sinning nun's place from out great clouds of blinding vapor streamed with a storm of golden stars, is stunning in its sense of compelling impressiveness and beauty.

"SISTER BEATRICE" is preceded by a view of the fourth act of Ibsen's "BRAND." The New Theater management is to be congratulated on its good taste and commendable discretion—in not having presented the other three acts. To be compelled to sit through just one act of "BRAND" would be a sufficiently severe penance for any wayward sister. And yet, there are some persons who like it. The Man In The Seat Behind Me, when the curtain fell, was heard to remark to the Lady In The Seat Next To Him: "Some drama that!" Whereupon the Lady was heard to reply: "Well, I guess yes!" From which it may also be observed that the clientele of the New Theater is becoming augmented beyond the limits of mere society art lovers.

The story revealed in "BRAND" has to do with a man and wife whose child has died. As is not entirely unnatural, both feel sorry. The wife, as is also usually the case, indicates her grief more openly than the husband. A poor woman enters their home and begs warmth and clothes for her own little baby. And the husband prevails upon his wife that she can accomplish more good by giving this woman their dead child's garments than by hoarding them as sentimental tokens of remembrance, the obvious moral being, live for the

living. Had any other mortal than Henrik Ibsen written the play, the simple story would have been taken as it stands. But Ibsen having written it, learned theatergoing minds feel themselves impelled to read into its lines deep and mysterious significances, messages to Ibsen's countrymen, rarified philosophies and portentous symbolisms. The less educated theatergoing and home reading mind is content to wonder whether Mr. Ibsen was not, after all, something of a sly joker. Miss Annie Russell, in the approved tearful Ibsenish manner, enacts the part of Agnes in a Madame Xtra-dry fashion. She is full-of much bitterness. Agnes's last line is: "I am weary—weary—weary unto death." Agnes has nothing on the audience. "BRAND" is to be recommended as a pleasant evening's pastime for unlucky gamblers, reformers, jilted lovers, scholars and others who have a grudge against the world.

IN "THE GIRL HE COULDN'T LEAVE BEHIND HIM" Miss Hattie Williams has found a farcical touring car that puts her previous vehicle, "Detective Sparkes," in the 1905 model class. Imported from Germany, placed in running order by William Collier and driven by a generally capable corps of frolicking chauffeurs, the entertainment goes along briskly, stopping only once in the second act for want of laughing gasoline. Miss Williams herself is fitted with a part that, despite its brevity, suits her exceedingly well. The girl that "he couldn't leave behind him" is Lola Cornero, an Isadora Duncan who dances with her hips rather than her feet. The "him" is Felix Pendleton, one of the increasingly prevalent species of married men who love their wives but. Previous to his marriage Felix had kept company with Lola, and his wedding present to the latter was the promise that one day in each year should be hers. And when the curtain goes up, today's the day. The astute reader may amuse himself by guessing the rest and then going to see the play to prove to himself that he was right. William Collier's telegraphic touch has

imparted a snappy click to the entire performance and the resultant laughs are sent fully prepaid. The story of the farce is not exactly the sort that will be used as a text by ministers of the gospel, yet it is handled so craftily that "mothers, wives, sisters and sweethearts" may hear it with perfect safety.

"A SON OF THE PEOPLE" is a drama of the French Revolution, and yet its general air seems rather to be *allons, enfants de la Patrie*. There is a suspicion of Irish in it. Possibly this suggestion of Erinian atmosphere may be due to the somewhat Celtic appearance of Mr. Mason as the plebeian Marc Arron. Possibly it may be due to Mr. Hale's several bulls in the enunciation of the lines of Ernest Des Tressailles. Possibly it may be due to Miss Kaelred's *retroussé* delineation of the role of Alaine de l'Estoile. And possibly, it may all be a case of imagination. Yet, somehow, I could not get it entirely into my head that the drama I was witnessing was transpiring, as the program assured me it was, "in the salon of the Chateau Trionville, near Condé, France, in the month of Floreal, of the year II." My friend, the Chronic Faultfinder, protested against my confusion. "It impresses me as thoroughly French," he argued. And to give further weight to his opinion, he proceeded to convince me of the utter unlikelihood of the dramatists' not having been in absolute command of their atmosphere. "Frenchmen," he declared positively, "know their native subjects well." He handed me his program. "Read!" he said. I did: "A play in three acts by the Danish author, Sophus Michaelis, translated from the German version by Stephen Ivor Ssinyey!"

These tales of the French Revolution are all so much the same, with their proud, highborn aristocrat daughters "giving themselves" to lowly, yet masterful sons of the people. With no intention to be either disparaging or fliprant, it must be confessed that, as far as this critically skeptical pen is concerned, the heiress-chauffeur intrigues of the present day seem to carry about the

THE SMART SET

same measure of romantic conviction. Psychologically and pathologically, "A SON OF THE PEOPLE" failed to satisfy me. If, even in highly colored romance, it dealt in probabilities, I must yet argue against its having even so much as flirted with my sympathy. I am anything but prudish, dramatically or otherwise, but I submit that my heart can feel no great amount of concern at the spectacle of a good woman—as we are asked to believe she is—inviting a man to spend the night in her boudoir on the moral justification that the man has saved the life of her fiancé. To be sure, the latter was a despicable coward and the former a fearless hero, but if that be reason—well, I refuse to make the most of it. Not even my romantic charity covers that sin. I wonder what the future holds for these ladies to whom careless dramatists permit such moral laxity? Unquestionably the only thing that would have been left for Alaine de L'Estoile to do—in the language of her modern sister in the drama—would have been to "go to Rector's and make a hit." If sin has its element of reason, as it sometimes possibly may have, romance may bestow a glamourous aureole on it. But if it hasn't that element, all the romantic bombast and spectacularity in the world cannot give it any other name by which it will smell sweeter. It is certain, however, that young girls and young men with small downy mustaches will find this drama very "real," and that sentimental old maids will cry their eyes out over it. So it will undoubtedly be a financial success. The play has been mounted handsomely and there can be nothing but praise for Mr. Huffman, who staged it in a manner that wins the eye if not the heart.

MISS Florence Holbrook acts on "BRIGHT EYES" like boracic acid. With her pleasant personality and really refreshing singing charm, she makes one forget the irritating human cinders that are blown from the wings into the piece every once in a while for the purpose of trying to outline the "plot" and do other impossible things. Without

Miss Holbrook, "BRIGHT EYES" would need glasses. The music show, although containing several pleasing melodies, lacks the snap, the vim and the go of "Three Twins." This year's senior class at Yale is reported to have voted "BRIGHT EYES" the best musical comedy of the season. Is not education a wonderful thing, dear reader?

FOR the last month or so the Ben Greet Players have been making their annual incursions into the drama at the Garden Theater. Their performances have been praised highly by members of literary societies, culture clubs, societies for the discussion of the ethics of the drama and others who delight in taking sitting room falls out of the "commercial theater." Aside from the familiar and entirely praiseworthy presentation of "EVERYMAN," however, the Players have done nothing to bring envy to the hearts of the managers up-town, and with the exception of Mr. Greet himself, Miss Violet Vivian and Miss Beatrice Irwin, none of the company need ever fear that they will be besieged with offers of Broadway engagements.

FOLLOWING the vogue of the two-dollar thrill, the vaudeville houses have rushed forward with numerous spine-shockers at bargain rates. Two of the leading specimens, "DOPE" and "AFTER THE OPERA," have been inserted among the clog dances and trapeze acts at the American Theater. The first, by Joseph Medill Patterson, author of "The Fourth Estate," is a dramatization of a human drugstore in action, and the second, imported from the Grand Guignol, in Paris, is a several-scened exhibition of Gallic passion pacified in the end only by death itself. Both of the thrillers-*in-parvo* have attracted a considerable measure of attention, and both have fulfilled their purpose in imparting a quota of spinal shivers as an antidote for persistent vocalists who "on Wednesday nights are all alone, when they ought to be at some sweetheart's home."

IN PRAISE OF A POET

By H. L. MENCKEN

A CERTAIN English critic achieved the other day the awe inspiring feat of writing a long and learned essay on contemporary English poetry without once mentioning the contribution of Rudyard Kipling. The thing enchanted by its daring, but not, I regret to say, by its novelty, for something of the same sort had been done before by Americans, and more than once.

If you don't believe it, examine the files of the literary monthlies for the past ten years. There you will find numerous and copious dissertations, chiefly by woman college professors and earnest young bachelors of arts, upon the gentlemanly strophes of Richard Watson Gilder, the colossal blank verse masterpieces of Cale Young Rice, the somnambulistic rhapsodies of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, the passionate stanzas of Professor Woodberry, and the pompous piffle of a horde of other pundits—and seldom a word about Lizette Woodworth Reese! And yet I am firmly convinced, despite all these constituted and self-constituted authorities, that Miss Reese is of vastly more dignity and worth as a poet than any of the meistersingers mentioned, and that there is more merit in a single one of her sonnets than a diligent search will discover in the collected rhythmic writings of the whole congregation. In support of which conviction I hereby suspend my rule against quoting books long enough to print the sonnet in question. It bears the title of "Tears" and forms part of Miss Reese's latest collection, "A WAYSIDE LUTE" (*Mosher*, \$1.50). Here it is:

When I consider Life and its few years—
A wisp of fog betwixt us and the sun;
A call to battle, and the battle done
Ere the last echo dies within our ears;
A rose choked in the grass; an hour of fears;
The gusts that past a darkening shore do beat;
The burst of music down an unlistening street—
I wonder at the idleness of tears.
Ye old, old dead, and ye of yesternight,
Chieftains and bards and keepers of the sheep,
By every cup of sorrow that you had,
Loose me from tears, and make me see aright
How each hath back what once he stayed to weep:
Homer his sight, David his little lad!

It is a vain thing, of course, to attempt to point out the beauties of a work of art when they must be patent to any sane observer, but in the present case I can't resist calling attention to the fine simplicity of this exquisite sonnet, to the quite remarkable beauty of its phrases, to its haunting rhythms, to the noble dignity which lifts it up and certifies to its author's possession of something rarer and more worthy than mere craftsmanship. Like most other poems from Miss Reese's pen, it is written in the severely plain and almost austere tongue of early England. A deliberate attempt to avoid the sounding Latin is evident; setting aside the two proper names, there is scarcely a word not of Anglo-Saxon origin. But the effect of barrenness, which is so apt to follow such a choice of vocabulary, is nowhere to be noted. The words, in brief, are short and common, but there is music in them and more music in their felicitous collocation.

No doubt the sciolist will find much fault with "Tears." There is room, I

suppose, for furious debates over its rhyme scheme, and excuse for objecting to its seventh line on the ground that it does not scan. May the curse of Cadmus fall upon all such pedantries! That seventh line is one of the glories of the sonnet. It is a perfect example of the broken rhythm which Sidney Lanier, with his sensitive musician's ear, found to be the sweetest of all the sweets of English poetry. What a beautiful line it is, indeed! Change it; get rid of a syllable; make it scan—and see how much it loses! And what could be more nobly sonorous than the tenth line, or more nakedly simple than the first, eighth and ninth lines, or more eloquent than the whole of the concluding sestet? Believe me, we have here a sonnet that no other American has ever approached. To find its mates we must go to Keats's sonnet on Chapman's "Homer," to Milton's on his blindness, to Wilde's "Easter Day."

"Tears" is not new. I remember reading it fully ten years ago, and it is to be found in Stedman's "Anthology," despite the fact that the magazine Hannah More's have yet to discover its superlative merit. I used to spend a good deal of time wondering why it appealed to me so strangely, for its beauties of phrase could not alone explain that appeal, and the idea at the bottom of it was one which my private creed rejected utterly. That is to say, I was profoundly convinced that we poor mortals would *not* find a place of recompense beyond the grave, where Homer was no longer blind and David no longer a father bereft; and yet, as I have said, this sonnet moved me as few other poems had ever moved me. Why? The answer tarried until I happened upon the theory that the overpowering impressiveness of certain lofty poetry depends largely, if not entirely, upon the very fact that it is incredible.

Look for this gorgeous unveracity and you will find it often. Suppose the "Odyssey," for example, were reduced to straightforward prose; what would be the result? Simply a long string of tedious impossibilities. So, too, with the "Iliad," the "Divine Comedy," "Par-

adise Lost" and the "Psalms." And so, too, with that greatest of poems in prose—the one delivered on the heights to "great multitudes of people from Galilee and from Decapolis and from Jerusalem and from Judea and from beyond Jordan." In the whole of the Sermon on the Mount, indeed, there are scarcely half a dozen promises or statements of fact which admit of literal acceptance. The meek, as we all know by bitter experience, do *not* inherit the earth, and everyone that asketh does *not* receive, and it is *not* safe to take no thought for raiment. Thus with all the noblest work of the bards and bishops. It is overpoweringly beautiful, but it is also untrue, and its very potency and beauty lie in its bold untruth.

Here I come to the toxic theory of art preached of late by Willard Huntington Wright, a critic of whom more will be heard anon. Wright says that all art is a sort of autointoxication—a voluntary enchantment brought on by the artist to enable him to escape from the sour facts of life. An artist, in other words, is one who, with bravado and eloquence, denies Nature and all her works, and creates for himself a new cosmos, dripping with the fictions that he wishes were true. If his medium happens to be alcohol, he turns night into day, cold into warmth, hunger into satiety, drabs into goddesses; if it is music, he converts unclean German violinists, with union cards in their pockets, into choirs of angels, and the low notes of the trombone into the voice of the Lord God Himself; and finally, if it is the written or spoken word, he adds his magic to a palpable falsehood and makes of it a thing more beautiful than truth. "The Lord abideth back of me, to guide my fighting arm"—so sings Mulholland. Balderdash! But what a thrill is in it!

The prosodists and grammarians, sensing all this in their dull way, speak vaguely of hyperbole and call it a figure of speech. But hyperbole means nothing more than an extravagant accentuation in degree, while the thing I am discussing is essentially a complete transvaluation of value. Thus Robert

Loveman, when he sang of Valerie that "past the telling of the tongue is the glory of her hair," was merely enthusiastic, but Robert Browning, when he ventured the assertion that all was right with the world, was in a state of artistic self-enchantment, for the world in his time was plainly imperfect, and its very imperfection was its most insistent characteristic. Facing that disagreeable fact, he sought to make it bearable in the fashion of a true artist. That is to say, he boldly denied it, insisting that he saw only perfection and making a beautiful song upon it. The chief charm of his song, I believe, lies in its palpable untruth. Reading it, one arrives at some measure of his own agreeable toxemia, and as the poppy goes coursing through one's veins, one sees only blue skies and leafy forest aisles and nesting birds. It is pleasant. It soothes. It makes life more bearable.

But away with all such theorizing! Miss Reese's fine stanzas rise above it. There are sonnets in her book that are worthy to stand with "Tears," even though they fail to equal it. And there are other verses of abounding merit, too. She has a hand for telling epithet; she knows how to draw a vivid picture with a few phrases. The poem called "Wild Geese" offers an example. It is a Whitmanish series of irregular and often disconnected lines, and yet how plainly one sees that drab sky, that ancient village, that lonely wagon track, that honking flock of gray birds! The book stands head and shoulders above the common run of verse. It is worth reading and rereading—and Mr. Mosher has printed it in a fashion that does him credit.

THE lesser bards suffer by coming after one of such abounding virtues. One of those that follow is Bliss Carman, who offers a collection of eighteen poems under the title of "THE ROUGH RIDER" (*Kennerley*, \$1.00). Mr. Carman has a fondness for the quasi-ballad form made so familiar by Kipling, and it must be admitted that he handles it with uncommon skill. A certain me-

talic clangor is in his verse; it gallops—it is dramatic. The present collection in itself would scarcely make a poet's reputation, but at no place does it sink to the level of mere fustian. "THE GUEST AT THE GATE," by Edith M. Thomas (*Badger*, \$1.25), is less satisfactory. I find her sonnets formal, ponderous, bloodless, and her longer pieces tedious. Her best work is in her short lyrics. In "ATYS," by Blanche Shoemaker Wagstaff (*Kennerley*, \$1.00), there is a rather remarkable mixture of good and bad. Here and there Mrs. Wagstaff seems to be daunted by the elemental problems of verse making, but in other places she achieves, with apparent ease, effects of unusual beauty. The poems have no arresting emotional content; they reveal a Greek delight in beauty for its own sake.

"THE PRISON SHIPS" (*Sherman-French*, \$1.25) is by Thomas Walsh, a poet whose name has begun to appear with frequency in the magazines. The chief fault noticeable in Mr. Walsh's verses is a tendency toward harsh and unmelodious lines. But that fault is by no means insistent. In certain of his poems—"Endless Spring" and "Russian Springsong," for example—the music of the true lyric is to be found. Then comes "THE DEATH OF MAID McCREA," a thin little book by O. C. Auringer (*Badger*, \$1.00). The Parnassian directories are silent about Mr. Auringer, and he is apparently a bard of no great experience; it may be said for him, however, that he writes extremely smooth and agreeable blank verse.

MORE blank verse is set before us in Charles Hanson Towne's "MANHATTAN" (*Kennerley*, \$1.00), a praiseworthy attempt to put into words the magnificent poetry of a great city. But it is in the occasional lyrics of his poem that Mr. Towne does his best work. Curiously enough, the very best of these lyrics, "I Saw the Tired City," reveals the same thought that is at the bottom of Richard Le Gallienne's "Sleep for London." There is here no hint of imitation, but only proof that

two poets, in the presence of a mass of suggestions, have responded together to one. Mr. Towne need not blush at the comparison. His lines have the strong throb of good verse in them; they are not only graceful, but also eloquent. In his blank verse there is far less merit. In places—as on Page 26, for example—it descends to the level of prose sawed into lengths.

AND now come the poets whose strophes are frankly villainous. We have such poets with us always—God bless them! Who would see them hanged? Not I! I am covered with shame, in fact, whenever their earnest rhapsodies make me swear, for a poet, no matter how bad, is always a shade better than an ordinary man. That is because the impulse to write poetry is an impulse toward beauty, and the man who has it is lifted up by it. Let no one laugh at him! He is a poor knight battling valiantly against the moralizing scoundrels who would make happiness sinful and the money grubbing thieves who would make it expensive.

Therefore let us be gentle with J. D. Henderson, author of "THE OAK AMONGST THE PINES" (*Badger*, \$1.00); Edwin Preston Dargan, author of "HYLAS" (*Badger*, 75 cents); William Henry Venables, author of "FLORIDIAN SONNETS" (*Badger*, 75 cents), and T. Carl Whitmer, author of "SYMBOLISMS," (*Badger*, 50 cents). The first three are safe and sane metricians of the Poets' Corner type, saying obvious things in the old, old way. Mr. Henderson tells us in his preface that the composition of his stanzas gave him "inspiration to a nobler and happier life"; Mr. Venable prints a portrait of himself, showing him in the throes of literary endeavor; Mr. Dargan puts his dedication into a dashing French quatrain. Harmless fellows! May their tribe increase! May they go on hunting rhymes for ten thousand years! Even Mr. Whitmer, perhaps, deserves a slap on the back, though his flights are so wild that I haven't the slightest idea what he is talking about.

I RESCUE "SCHOOL ROOM ECHOES," by Mary C. Burke (*Badger*, \$1.00), from the hell box to give immortality to one incomparable stanza, to wit:

Once there was a little boy,
Whose name was U. S. Grant;
His father was a poor man,
Who hides to leather tanned.

The book, it would seem, is planned for school use, and there is a hint that other volumes are to follow. May some kindly epidemic come to the help of the poor kids condemned to memorize its strophes! And may a jug of applejack be handy when the first copy reaches Hades, and the shade of poor J. Gordon Cooglar discovers that his "Purely Original Verses" are no longer the worst ever written by a human being!

THE spring novels are apparently without number. Sweating expressmen roll them into my studio upon heavy trucks and pile them in huge pyramids. They come in all the loud, indecent colors and are of all sizes. Some are mere short stories, stuffed for the book trade like Strassburg geese, while others are almost endless. I employ a couple of intelligent young colored men to go through them, boil them down, and when necessary, translate them into English, and as a result I am able to make fair headway with them.

The astonishing thing about them is not that they are so bad, but that they are so good. A really tiresome story is rare among them; in the very worst of them you will commonly find enough vivacity and ingenuity to keep you awake. As a rule, of course, you will find nothing else, but that is not to be wondered at, for first class, full length novels are not written every day. (Our American output, during the past ten years, has been about one and a half a year.) But in the writing of entertaining trifles, designed frankly for the department store book counters, many Americans excel. We have, I should say, fully a hundred such authors, which is far more than any other country can show, and they have no need individually to fear their foreign rivals.

Has England or France or Germany a match for Robert W. Chambers or George Barr McCutcheon or Mary Roberts Rinehart or Rex Beach or F. Hopkinson Smith or Ellen Glasgow or Booth Tarkington or Weir Mitchell? I doubt it. A hundred years from now, of course, all these assiduous and diverting manufacturers of best sellers will be forgotten as utterly as the canons of Sir John Phelypes, but while they live they entertain us agreeably and harmlessly and well deserve every dollar they get for their labor.

An excellent example of this inoffensive form of American fiction is "**THE CROSSWAYS**," by Helen R. Martin (*Century Co.*, \$1.50). Here we have the story of a refined Southern girl who in a moment of weakness marries a Pennsylvania Dutch physician and goes to live with him in the *pfannehase* belt among his unspeakable relatives. The tale is of conventional cut, and there is no discernible idea at the bottom of it, but the Pennsylvania Dutch characters are presented with considerable skill and the dialect is full of realistic touches. Altogether, it is a book that kills time very pleasantly without making the slightest demand upon either the emotions or the intelligence.

"**THE SNARE OF CIRCUMSTANCE**," by Edith E. Buckley (*Little-Brown*, \$1.50), approaches the customary type even more closely, for it is a tale of mystery, with the inevitable ghosts of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson at their inevitable magic, and the inevitable touch of young love at the close. It fills nearly four hundred closely printed pages and is well worth the money asked for it.

IN "**THE KINGDOM OF SLENDER SWORDS**," by Hallie Erminie Rives (*Bobbs-Merrill*, \$1.50), we visit Japan and behold great doings among the diplomats and other high flying Caucasians resident there. Miss Rives has a fine hand for word painting, and so some of her descriptions fairly blind the eye. A multitude of Japanese words and phrases—*Konichi-wa, ninjim, torii*,

amah, semi, Yamato-Damashii and other such rare birds—give a muddled sort of color to the narrative, and there is all the usual *table d'hôte* French of the woman novelists. A rapid and electric story, differing in many important details from the cut and dried Japanese yarns of the Cook's tour authors.

"**KINGS IN EXILE**" (*Macmillan*, \$1.50) is a collection of Charles G. D. Roberts's animal stories, reprinted from the *Youth's Companion*, the *Ladies' Home Journal* and other excellent periodicals. It may be said of them that they are of middling merit, standing halfway between the incomparable "Jungle Tales" and the tedious chronicles of the fireside nature fakirs. Much the same sort of genial mediocrity marks "**THE UP GRADE**," by Wilder Goodwin (*Little-Brown*, \$1.50). Here we encounter our old friend, the gentleman who has gone to the dogs, and here we see once more how he is lifted up by his honest passion for a pure young girl. In "**MISS MARSHALL'S BOYS**," by Edward C. Bass (*Badger*, \$1.00), a still older friend smiles upon us. He is "Little Joe," the Sunday school boy. Joe's father is a slave of the wine cup, and his stepmother, I rather suspect, smokes cigars. At any rate, Joe himself is turned into the streets and becomes a bad boy. Then enters Miss Elizabeth Marshall, the earnest young Sunday school worker, and Joe's days of carefree nonage are over. He becomes a patient student of Holy Writ; he washes behind the ears; he sends money to the heathens; he acquires an almost pathological thirst for virtue. When we part with him he is an opulent and pious old man. The very pattern of an old time Sunday school story. God help the poor youngster who is forced to read it!

"**SALLY BISHOP**," by E. Temple Thurston (*Kennerley*, \$1.50), is an English importation by an author who plainly takes himself very seriously. He is afraid that his story is a bit over the heads of the plain people, and he says so in his dedication to Gerald Du

Maurier. The "delicate mind," he "anticipates" will shrink from Chapter VI of Book II. But he doesn't care. It is simply impossible for him to write ordinary, antiseptic fiction. He *must* get in his poisonous touches. So much for Mr. Thurston himself. As for his book, it is the somewhat dull history of a young woman who shares a man's apartments without obtaining any dower right in his property. In the last chapter he leaves her—and she commits suicide. Mr. Thurston, for all I know, may be a grandfather, but none the less, I venture the remark that he is still exceedingly jejune and ingenuous.

ANOTHER tedious English novel is "**TRIAL BY MARRIAGE**," by W. S. Jackson (*Lane, \$1.50*). The hero of this tale is an Englishman who in early youth permits a bedizened lady to marry him. When she finds to her horror that he has no money, she quietly departs for America, and he is led to believe—though why any sane man should believe it, I fail to see—that she is dead. Then he marries a fair young cousin and settles down to life in the country. This marriage brings him opulence, and everyone expects him to make a stir in the world, but he slouches along year after year in an aimless, useless sort of way. One day the bedizened lady bobs up again and essays to blackmail him. Terrified and disgusted with himself, he quietly slips off to South America, and his wife is led to believe—though why she should believe it, I fail to see—that he is dead. More years pass, and she is just about to marry another man, when the exile returns. The story then stops—for which the saints be praised! It is a muddled and incredible narrative and its occasional merits do not balance its defects.

COMING to "**THE MARKET FOR SOULS**," by Elizabeth Goodnow (*Kensnerley, \$1.25*), we return to America and the white lights of New York. Miss Goodnow appears to be a settlement worker who has labored among the women of the streets, and it may be said for her that her studies of them are of

quite remarkable vividness. So far as I know, indeed, she is the first respectable woman in the history of the world to show any honest human sympathy for the contaminated of her sex or any understanding of their emotions and motives. It is almost always assumed by professional moralists—by which term I mean preachers, sociologists, reformers, nice old ladies and other persons of no experience whatever—that the Magdalen is either the vile slave of her insatiate passions or the helpless victim of some horrid male. The former theory is responsible for much useless missionary effort, and the latter is to blame for all the present pothor about the so-called white slave trade, an industry which has scarcely any existence in fact. Miss Goodnow knows better. She knows that few women of that sort are actually vicious, and she knows, too, that few of them are slaves. In these slight sketches she lets them account for themselves in their own way, and as a result we get a very accurate presentation of their philosophy. It is not a book to give to your pastor, for its veracity will outrage both his prudery and his theories of sin, but as a serious contribution to the literature of a subject that is seldom investigated save blunderingly and by fools, it has uncommon interest and value.

"**TESTIMONY**," by Alice and Claude Askew (*Lane, \$1.50*), rather recalls "**The Crossways**," by Mrs. Martin, reviewed in a preceding paragraph. That is to say, both books deal with a young wife's efforts to adjust herself to the prejudices of her husband's relatives. But in "**TESTIMONY**" the principal figure is not the young wife but her mother-in-law, an austere product of the hard New England rocks. Here and there in the book the authors have yielded to the vice of overwriting, but in general it is an interesting and workmanlike performance, standing well above the ordinary novel of commerce.

FROM New England we journey to Quebec, where "**OVER THE QUICK-SANDS**," by Anna Chapin Ray (*Little-*

Brown, \$1.50), introduces us to persons of the first consideration. The son of a New York millionaire, invading that quiet old town, unearths some staggering secrets of his father's past. And forget not the novel incident of the young man who falls in love with a charming girl, only to discover that she is his sister! A book of varied and unprecedented delights, with characters cut carefully to the orthodox best seller patterns.

O. HENRY will not down. Here he comes again with two new books of short stories—"STRICTLY BUSINESS" (*Doubleday-Page*, \$1.20), and "OPTIONS" (*Harper's*, \$1.50). An extraordinary and often painful vivacity marks these tales. Their intrigues are amazingly ingenious; they are full of staggering surprises; their humor is laid on with a shovel. But for all that ingenuity and comicality, they suffer vastly from sameness. You are always well aware when you begin a story that its ending will be, of all possible endings, the most incredible. And you grow weary after a while of the highly artificial O. Henry slang. All the characters of these tales speak it. Now and then the author makes palpable efforts to differentiate his creations, but as a rule he quickly gives it up as hopeless.

"THE BEAUTY," by Mrs. Wilson Woodrow (*Bobbs-Merrill*, \$1.50), is a best seller dealing with a wife whose yearning for self-expression draws her away from her millionaire husband. It need not detain us. "A FOOL THERE WAS," by Porter Emerson Browne (*Fly*, \$1.50), is a "novelization," screaming with punctuation marks, of the author's "drammer" of the same name. "CRAG NEST," by T. C. DeLeon (*Dillingham*, \$1.50), is a novel by a Southern author—which is all the description that the astute reader needs. In the present case, it must be confessed, the tale is less polemical than usual, but Mr. De Leon makes up for that singularity by an introductory essay upon Sheridan's ride in the most learned style of the sub-Potomac cabalists.

When will the Southern authors come to the end of their Talmud of the Civil War? When will they finish their scotching of Yankee libels, I wonder?

HEREFORD—

by M. Dunton Sparrow.
(*Badger*, \$1.25)

An amateur's well meant effort to write a moral tale.

THE SOUL OF MAN UNDER SOCIALISM— by Oscar Wilde.

(*Luce*, 75 cents)
A convenient reprint of Wilde's famous essay.

THE WHITE FLAME—

by Luke North.
(*Golden Press*, \$1.00)

An uncommonly tedious lot of theosophical balderdash, chopped into quarters and called a four-act play.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF HAPPINESS— by R. Waite Joslyn.

(*Normalist Pub. Co.*, \$1.00)
Two hundred pages of ponderous platitudes.

THE COOK-ED-UP PEARY-ODD-ICAL DICTIONARY—

by Paul R. Dash.
(*Luce*, 75 cents)
Rather labored humor.

THE LIFE OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, EXPURGATED.

by W. L. Stoddard.
(*Butterfield*, \$1.25)

Another vain attempt to prove that William Shakespeare, of Stratford, was not the William Shakespeare who wrote "Hamlet." Let me advise Mr. Stoddard to give earnest study to Chapter VI of "The Elements of Inductive Logic," by Thomas Fowler.

LOVE LETTERS OF FAMOUS ROYALTIES AND COMMANDERS—

Compiled by Lionel Strachey.
(*McBride*, \$1.75)

A gaudy and seductive volume. The dignitaries whose soft nothings are reprinted range from Napoleon I to Von Moltke, and from Marlborough to Sophie Dorothea of Hanover. The same diverting folly marks all the epistles.

THE ART OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM—

by David C. Preyer.

(Page, \$2.00)

Mr. Preyer attempts no exhaustive catalogue, but rambles here and there, pointing out the things worth seeing, and stopping now and then to read the moral of the things not worth seeing. An interesting and valuable book.

THE FAITH HEALER—

by William Vaughn Moody.

(Macmillan, \$1.25)

The acting version of Mr. Moody's play. The changes made in the original, which was published last year, are chiefly in the direction of condensation.

ELEKTRA—

by Ernest Hutcheson.

(Schirmer, \$1.00)

An admirable study of Richard Strauss's opera, with a critical analysis of the score, motive by motive.

PONTIAC—

by A. C. Whitney.

(Badger, \$1.00)

A prose and blank verse drama of the sort that all cultured American gentlemen used to write. It tells the story of Chief Pontiac's last stand against the builders of Michigan.

EVOLUTION—

by Langdon Smith.

(Luce, \$1.00)

A pretentious reprint of Langdon Smith's famous verses, with a commentary made up of selections from the writings of various pundits and rhetoricians, a biographical introduction, and an interesting afterward on the history of the doctrine of evolution.

THE INDISSOLUBILITY OF MARRIAGE—

by S. L. Tyson.

(University Press, 75 cents)

A clear and convincing demonstration, out of the New Testament, that remarriage after divorce is absolutely forbidden by the Christian religion.

THE SACRIFICE—

by Amarita B. Campbell.

(Badger, \$1.00)

Extremely bad poetry upon biblical themes.

REUBEN: HIS BOOK—

by Morton H. Pemberton.

(Broadway Pub. Co., \$1.00)

The heavy stuff which passes for humor in the medicated lingerie belt.

MARY'S ADVENTURES IN THE MOON—

by A. Stowell Worth.

(Badger, 75 cents)

An entertaining romance for the kids, with plenty of good pictures.

THE SPIRIT OF THE SOUTH—

by Will Wallace Harney.

(Badger, \$1.50)

Prose fancies and verses upon life in Dixie, with not a few smears of sound merit.

BREEZES FROM THE SOUTHLAND—

by Josie S. Mayes.

(Broadway Pub. Co., 75 cents)

Harmless "compositions" in the high school manner.

SOCIALISM FOR STUDENTS—

by Joseph E. Cohen.

(Kerr, 50 cents)

A brief but enthusiastic exposition of the Socialist philosophy, comprehensible to the meanest understanding.

WHY NOT NOW?—

by Charles Gilbert Davis, M.D.

(Badger, \$1.00)

Tedious religious exhortations by a bore. He points out what he regards as the errors of Haeckel and Nietzsche, spelling their names "Hoeckel" and "Nitsche."

THE WORLD OF SUCKERS—

by Lionel Josaphare.

(Danner, \$1.00)

A refreshing novelty from California. Mr. Josaphare's suckerarianism is ten times as entertaining as the pragmatism of Professor James, and a hundred times as sound.